



Claims Department

OK, I know, I know...

I haven't done any more of the music issues since, oh..., February. I'M SORRY!!! Weather, life, work, and most of all, researching has left me little time to work on them, so now, here's this!

What is this, exactly?

Well, *Claims Department* started as a gimmickzine, and this is gonna be a different gimmick. You see, I've been writing while enjoying my coffee. Short bursts, as it were, but enjoyable. So, I've determined that every time I drink a coffee, I'll write a piece, and try and wrap it up so that every article is just the product of a single cup.

Admittedly, some drank slower than others...

AND ANOTHER THING!!!

Yes, like most of my zines these days, there's a lot of me working with MidJourney and DeepDreamGenerator, but there's also a bunch of 1980s and 90s fanart that Henry Welch never got to use when he was doing *The Knarley KNews* and he passed along to me! That makes me happy, as I love that stuff!

OK, here we go!





The Jay Haldeman stories—"Thirty-Love"

You have a fundamental advantage over the world. You use it to make yourself rich, part of which means that you're away from the partner you love more than anything as a way to buy them the future you've always promised. You reach a fork in the road and can complete your personal goal or set another along a different path, a better path. That's the basic outline of the philosophical question within Jack C. Haldeman II's *Thirty Love*, but there's so much more going on because it's actually a question within that question.

Do we approve?

And this is a major part of why I love Jay Haldeman's writing.

The story is one of Charlie Duncan, a professional tennis player. He's got a secret: he can flash-forward into the future, meaning he can see where the ball is going to go, how the match is going to play out. He flashes forward and comes back, makes his moves. The way Haldeman describes the method is sensational, in that it brings the reader a specific sensation, and one that I found quite jarring in the best possible way. This is something I would never want to feel in the flow, but rather as a sharp punt, a rush and push and the scene is ours. It's a wonderful effect, and one that a lesser writer could easily have fouled up. This is not a psychedelic story, or even a psychedelic event. It's an ability that one figures out how to deal with.

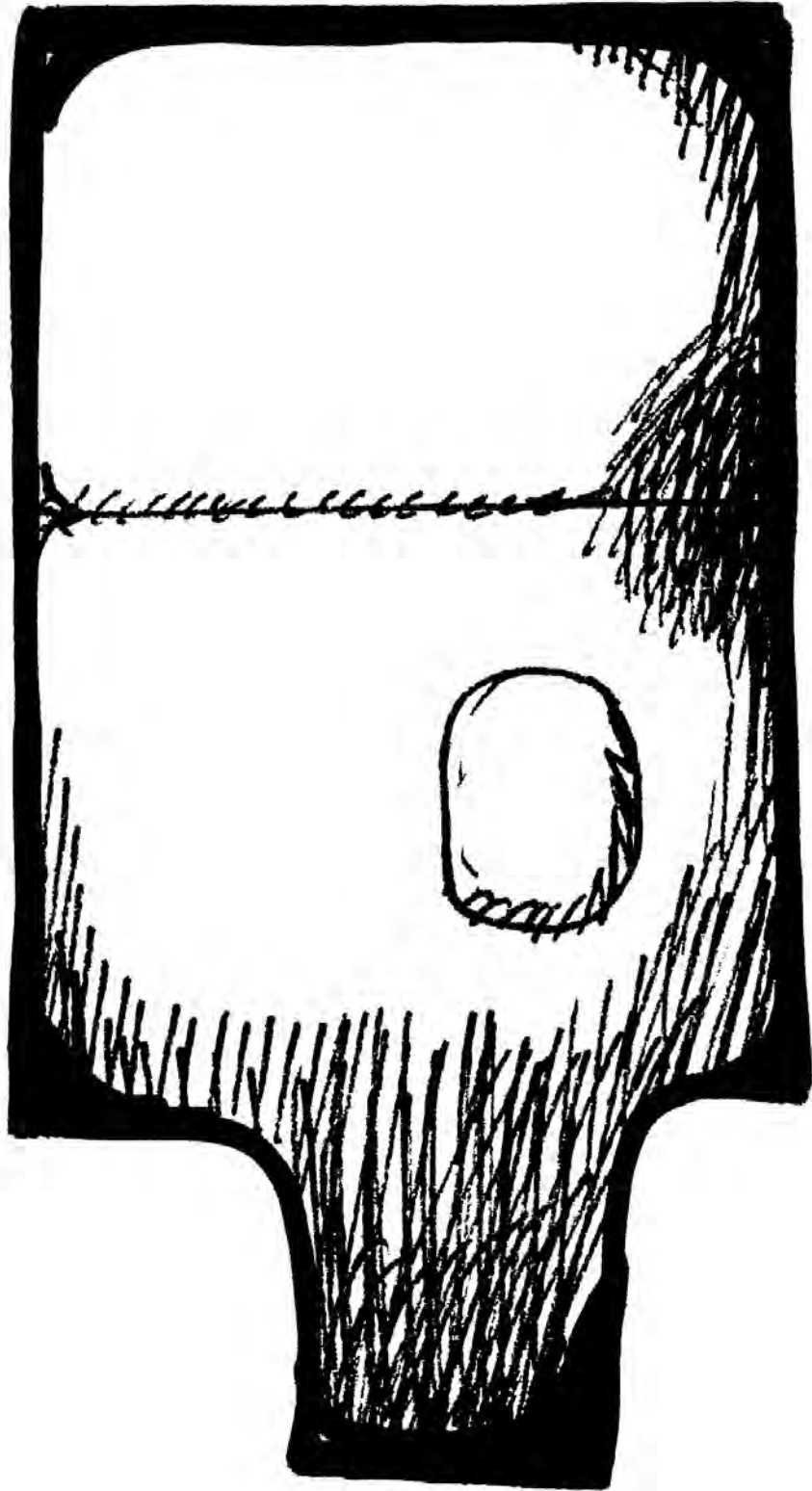
And he makes his living off of it.

Let me bring something up, and it's something I'm not 100% certain Jay Haldeman, but it does seem to be a theme in several of his stories – cheating. The flashing-forward idea is a form of cheating, a fantastical form of cheating, but still cheating. It's all about having an advantage over the other guy. The idea of steroids as a significant part of sports was on the rise in public consciousness by the late 1970s, so it would make a lot of sense that Jay would add a tinge of that into his stories, though it wasn't so deeply ingrained that it was the meme that it is today. Several of Jay's stories deal with the idea of how to cheat, and how it effects the choices that the players have to make.

And that's the one we see here. He can cheat to win, but he also has a view of what's going to happen if he does, and he makes a choice. In this case, it's a choice where he has to walk a tightrope. He has a goal that he's been working for, and he's literally 'one day away from retirement!' and his opponent is a kid in his first big time tourney finals, and has everything ahead of him. The flash tells him what will happen... or at least what could happen. I guess you can see that this is going to be a moral issue, but it's not quite simply that. It's about not only free will, but about what is cheating, even if it isn't to benefit yourself. I love that angle.

It's a wonderful story, one with an impressive moral and a hero, who is also the villain.

That's right, he's both. Like John McEnroe.



IMPASSE

KORSTON



My New Meals

Since I've found out that I'm diabetic, and have high blood pressure, I've had to start cooking and eating different. Here's the most frequently made dish around GarciaGate Manor.

1 to 1.5 pounds lean ground beef or pork (90% lean or better)

6 to 8 ounces mushrooms (Shiitakes or Crimini), sliced

1 medium yellow onion, diced

5 to 10 cloves of garlic, minced or crushed

1 to 2 tbsp fresh basil, chopped (or 1 tbsp dried basil)

1 to 2 tbsp crushed ginger (or 1.5 tbsp dried ginger)

2 Tbsp soy sauce or Coconut aminos.

Salt (or Trader Joe's Umami seasoning) and Pepper to taste.

Olive Oil

Warm Olive oil (start with 1 tbsp) over medium heat. Add mushroom, toss in the pan, and you might need to add a little more oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. After a minute or two, add the onion, a little more salt and pepper, and then toss until the onions are nearly translucent. Then add the meat.

Break up the meat, and after it's partly browned, add the garlic, basil, and soy or coconut aminos. Lower heat to medium low after all the pink is gone and cook for another couple of minutes.

Remove with a slotted spoon and put it into a bowl. This, you can eat with tortilla chips, or mix in a little bit of ricotta, or some shredded cheese. This usually makes 2 to 3 servings.





SO, for the first time in 8 years, WrestleMania was in California.

I pretty much only go to wrestling when it's super-close and fairly cheap. WrestleMania ain't cheap, and the other shows that popped up around town the same weekend weren't cheap either. Though, my Mom lives about an hour and a half from LA, so no need for a hotel, and my kids were going there for Spring Break. I made a plan to go to The Collective, a series of Indy wrestling shows, both US and Japanese groups, and then go to my Mom's and watch the actual WrestleMania shows on television with the kids (and Mom's kitchen with its beautiful flat-top) and then head home and enjoy the week without the kids until I flew back down to pick them up and bring 'em home!

I drove down a day early. I was actually staying with a friend, the amazing Derek McCaw, for the first night in Burbank. I drove down, stopping for breakfast/lunch (it was 10:30am-ish) at Split-Pea Anderson's on 101 in Buellton. I had the endless bowl of soup, with fixin's, and it was delicious and filling enough to keep me going for the next few hours. This was followed by passing through my favorite city in Central California, Solvang, and then on up and over to Santa Barbara on one of the most beautiful drives in all of California. I was listening to a cozy mystery at first, and then one of the Great Courses, this one on The Manhattan Project. I pulled into a gas station in Thousand Oaks and used the bathroom and changed to podcasts, which had me listening to the ultra-fannish Octothorpe, and then the LA-based Ghosttown. It was a story about LA in the 1980s, which was a time I spent in and around LA often.

I got in to Burbank early enough to do a little shopping. Derek lives around the corner from a shop called Blast from the Past. It's a combination comic shop, bookstore, and memorabilia store. I saw that they had a bunch of pulps, and not at bad prices. For 20 bucks, I got two Argosys, and two Railroad Stories, a gift to James that I still need to send his way. I left the store and drove a bit around Burbank, found a Rite-Aid so I could get



some Breath-Right strips, and then found a Hollywood Bookstore, which was literally in the same building as Blast from the Past, but I had somehow missed on my first visit. The selection of books was really good, with some very obscure 1980s titles, and a LOT of movie zines, and quite a few VHS and DVDs. Sadly, no actual films.

I met up with Derek and we caught up. He's an amazing guy, and I have to say that of all the people I know, Derek is likely the one person I would most like to make proud of me. He's human, and moreover, humane. We headed over to Zankou Chicken for dinner.

Now, I'm going to go on about Zankou for a minute. It's Mediterranean food - shawarma, chicken tarna, felafel, and other wonderful fare. Founded by Armenians in the 1980s, the restaurant has a bit of a darker history (founder Mardiros Iskendarian murdered his mother and sister before killing himself, a story you can read in my book, *Food and Crime*, coming out July 29th, 2023!) but the food is really good step-above-fast food fare. I got the mixed sish, lamb and beef, with rice and hummus and extra tanhini.

And garlic sauce.

Now, the famed garlic sauce is good. It's light and fluffy, and on its own is pretty good, but mixed with the hummus and a little tahini, and it's magic to dip the meat into.

And that's what I did. Heaven.

We ate, and headed back to Derek's. I conked out pretty early, probably by 930, and slept on a pull-out. I had to get up early.

On the second day, I woke up early. The first show started at 11, so I woke up at 6, then got a shower and headed to Bob's Big Boy.

Now, I love Bob's. When I was a kid, the family would head there for dinner before going to the movies at the theatres right behind the one on Winchester Blvd in San Jose. The Fisherman's Dinner, a friend piece of cod, three fried shrimp, a couple of fried scallops, and french fries, is my all-time favorite meal.

And is it any wonder that I'm a diabetic with high-blood pressure?

I got the Corned Beef and Hash, and coffee. So much coffee.

It was nothing special.

Actually, it was incredibly special.

So special.



It literally felt like what I would imagine my dad would have felt in the days when he'd get off from work early in the morning, swing by Bob's for breakfast and coffee. He'd be thinking about his kid, me, at home, just waking up and getting ready for school. I was thinking about the kids, then back at home, getting ready for the last couple of days before they went on spring break. I'm almost as old now as my dad was when he died. He'd have only been 26 when I was the same age as my kids, which is so strange to me. I think about Dad all the time, but never so much as when I'm thinking of my kids. He'd have loved being a grandpa. He's also have probably loved the corned beef hash, because he'd usually ordered them. I enjoyed breakfast and headed off to the Ukrainian Culture Center.

It may seem odd to have a series of wrestling shows at a place like a Ukrainian Culture Center, but the space is incredible and perfect for just this purpose. It's got high ceiling and a wide sort of rotunda. There's a beautiful preceium arch, and it's easily the most



beautiful place I've ever watched wrestling. There was a food window, though it wasn't open for the first show. I had a seat in the 3rd row, on the camera side, so the folks who bought the show on FiteTV could only see the back of my head.

It also meant that dives into the audience came right at me!

And there were a bunch of dives into the audience.

I knew exactly one of the wrestlers working the show, and in the main event. Santino Brothers Wrestling I believe it's a Southern California promotion and training school, and while the show was fun, no one really made a big impact. Willie Mack, a very large wrestler who does some incredible flying, was the one I had seen before, at the prior WrestleMania week in San Jose in 2015. His main event match was pretty darn good, and I'm glad I saw it.

There were a couple of really talented folks on the show. Killer Bae, Heather Monroe. She's got a great look, and she's fairly fluid in the ring. She's been around since 2016, and actually started at 26, about 4 or 5 years after a lot of modern wrestlers. There was also Bad Dude Tito, who looked kinda like a mix between Steve Dr. Death Williams and Rick Steiner from the 1990s. His match with Matt Vandagriff was probably the best wrestling on the show, and I'm glad there was more Tito later on!



The best discovery for me on the show was one of the refs—Scarlette Donovan. She's not only easy on the eyes, but she's got an incredible ability in the ring as a ref. She isn't a type you normally see, who appear to be trying to keep the match within the guidelines and are more along the lines of absent-minded authoritarians or dispassionate observers. No, she does it more as an involved, and concerned, member of the team trying not only to maintain control of the match, but to keep the wrestlers out of danger, in a way. The way she reacted to a blatant foul wasn't by getting in the face of the offender first, something you see from a lot of refs these days, but to check on the victim of the foul and then issue a warning to the offender. It's a much more interesting way to play the role, and it's completely unobtrusive! That's really what a ref should be and seldom is these days.

After the show, I headed down the way to Yoshinoya, a fast food place that's all over Hawaii (where I'll be in 10 days!) and SoCal, though all but one in Silicon Valley has closed. I got a rice bowl, full of thin-sliced ginger beef. It was tasty and filling, and would have to power me through the rest of the day!



On The Mighty, Mighty Bosstones

I went to school in Boston.

I never fail to mention this, do I?

It was the early 1990s and Ska was a big thing in the city, with several of the best-known bands in all of skadom coming from Beantown. There was Bim Skala Bim, The Allstonians, Skavoovie & The Epitones, and the biggest fish in the pond at the time – The Mighty, Mighty Bosstones.

They'd just been the Bosstones until a 1960s band called the Bosstones piped up. They added the 'Mighty, Mighty' part and it honestly fit. Pretty much everyone called them The Bosstones still, much like Suede when they had to become The London Suede officially.

I saw them numerous times, often with other bands that I loved from the West Coast. Skankin' Pickle, Fishbone (and that was a great show!) NOFX, The Tantra Monsters, Hepcat, and even the wonderful souls that made up Rancid before they had broken bigger and brought the ska sound that made Operation Ivy such a big deal back in the 1980s.

The Bosstones went through three phases – the early, the Metal Years, and the BIG TIME!

The Early

When the ground-breaking compilation *Mashin' Up the Nation* was released, it introduced a lot of folks to a lot of great bands, including Gangster Fun, who went on for about 20 years doing great stuff. The song *Drums & Chickens* was a lot of non-Boston-types introduction to the band, and it's a good example of the early phase. It was the combination of

Hard Core Punk and Ska, with Ska actually providing the backbone of the work. That was a great phase, and songs like *I Hope I Never Lose My Wallet*, *Drunks & Children*, and the impressive *Where'd You Go* are all not just excellent examples of The late 80s/turn-of-the-90s Bosstones, but also of Third Wave Ska at the middle of the first phase. They were releasing on Taaaang! Records, far better known for Hardcore than ska, and one of the most influential small labels in the US at the time.

I never saw the Bosstones in this period, though plenty of show videos over the years. I'd say they put on a really good show, and the crowds were a lot more niche than when I started going to their shows in the 1993 timeframe.

The Metal Years

The 1993 release of the EP *Ska-Core, the Devil and More* was the first obvious nod towards the fact that they were gonna be throwing more thrash into the mix. They had kinda hinted at this with the EP *Where'd You Go* in 1991, but in 1993, they released their biggest, and hardest and crunchiest, album up to that point – *Don't Know How to Party*. The album didn't get rid of all the ska sound, but there was a lot more metal. The horns were there, but really that was about it. It was pretty much the same for the 1994 album *Question the Answers*, though the song *Hell of a Hat* shows that they were at least still capable of giving us a more ska-based song, though the opening is a blaring blast of guitar and horns that settles into a standard, mid-tempo song, that only ventures into metal (and with a great line sung by the entire band as a chorus – 'sharpest mother-fucker in the join, other mother-fuckers stop and point'.

This period led a lot of Ska purists, and Boston was full of them at the time, to look elsewhere, and especially to bands like The Allstonians and Steady Earnest.

This was also the period where they went to Mercury records, and started selling a lot of records.

THE BIG TIME

The 1997 release of *Let's Face It* was huge.

This was their biggest record as far as sales go, and it coincides with the bands going back towards ska and away from the whole metal thing. The songs still have metal and hard core infused bits, but they were built as ska songs with, instead of hard core or metal songs cum ska. This formula was essential to the success of the band Rancid, the remnants of the seminal Bay Area Punk-Ska combo Operation Ivy, who returned to a ska sound with their second album. *The Rascal King*, a song inspired by legendary Boston mayor Curley, was a really good tune, but it was *The Impression That I Get* that was the big hit.

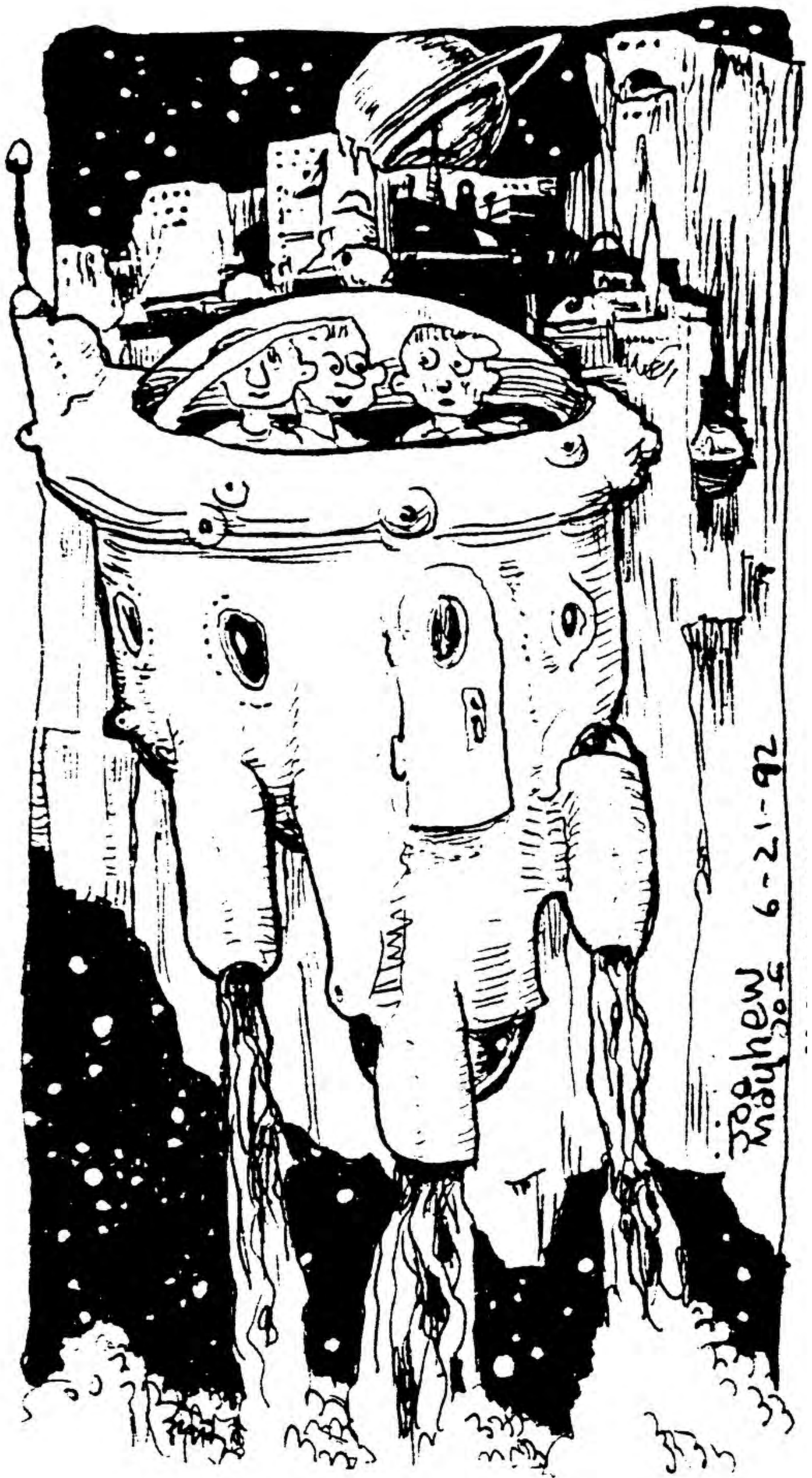
The follow-up, *Pay Attention* was stylistically similar to *Let's Face It*, but it lacked the emphasis. The three years of touring, including recording a pretty good live album at their New Year's show at the Middle East, and the album just felt flat. The band had a couple of departures, and it was clear that the peak had been back in 1997 and 98.

They lost their record deal with Island Records, and ended up recording *A Jackknife to a Swan*, a legitimately terrible album, on SideOne Dummy Records. They then took several years off, broke up, and returned in 2009 with a good album, *Pin Point and Gin Joints*. It was clear that their time in the sun was over, but they could still go. They released three more albums, all of them OK, and they released *When God Was Great* in 2021, which did really well in England. It's actually the best of their post-peak albums.

And also their last.

The band announced their break-up in 2022. Dickey Barrett had been making the rounds for years, including being the announcer for *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* for 18 years. Barrett, whose voice was a major marker of the band, had become a widely-known Anti-Vaxxer, and that was the straw that broke a couple of backs, it appears.

I still look back on the early phase of the Bosstones with a great fondness, especially the late 1980s stuff. It's a shame I didn't get to see 'em back then, but I'm glad for the dozen or so times I did manage to ride the plaid all night long.



Joseph 6-21-92



OK, so that's this issue!

I don't know when, or even how, the next issue will come, but there will be a next issue. It'll have my look at The Buzzcocks (including a piece by Cardinal Cox!) and more on WrestleMania week and my love of Jay Haldeman!

There'll also be more art!

The art this issue? I used MidJourney to make the cover, and the art on pages 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 15 and 16. 6, and I took the pics on pages 7 to 10.

Bill Rotsler was on page 4.

Joe Mayhew did the piece on page 13.

Jose Sanchez did the Mothman image on page 14 and I love it!

Thanks to Henry Welch for both of those!

I'll be at BayCon briefly, and then probably no cons for me until October, and maybe not even until next year. We'll see.

The Drink Tank has a new issue out, on 21st Century Crime Fiction, and we're doing *What We Do in the Shadows* (Deadline—May 25) and *The Manhattan Project* (June 25) next.

Journey Planet has Fictional/Mythical Musical Instruments, and for the end of the year, Jack the Ripper in Fiction!

I'm psyched for those!

OK, enough of me! Johnnyeponymous@gmail.com for comments!







Claims Department

Welcome to the second Coffee issue.

The gimmick - every article is written while drinking a single cup (or in a few cases gigantic tankard) of coffee. This time, it's mostly done while drinking a delightful Kona Macadamia blend, because we are less than a week away from going to Hawaii!!!

I plan on sleeping and hot-tubbing and ghost-walking and Costco shopping and easy cooking and ziplining and on and on and on.

We're also visiting Vanessa's family. And my Mom will be there. You know, free childcare!





The arts were hit...kinda.

It came out in a *Wall Street Journal* that Jeffrey Epstein had arranged a visit to the studio of artist Jeff Koons in 2013. A visit that would be accompanied by Woody Allen, another now-infamous figure for his improprieties with his own family.

In other words, a couple of monsters wanted to go and visit Jeff Koons' studio.

Now, if you know the art practice of Jeff Koons, this isn't too surprising. He burst on to the scene in the 1980s doing things like statues of balloon dogs, a massive porcelain of Michael Jackson and Bubbles. His really impressive work, as far as I'm concerned, was *Pup-*

py, a giant topiary in front of the Getty Museum in Bilbao, Spain.

Now, he's not the guy who does his own making. He's a designer, a conceptualizer, and that makes sense as he's a leading conceptual artist. He says his entire art practice, so far as he sees it, is making money. His museum is the art market, and there's no question that he's the master of it.

He says that his work has no intellectual meaning beyond the financial meaning of the pieces. He's wrong, of course. There's a lot of messaging that he tries to deny, particularly in the way he handles commodity objects and imagery. His work actually plays with the idea of the museum as the arbiter of what art's value.

He uses one meaning of value in his concepts, but there are multiple actually there.

I met Jeff years and years ago, and he's actually a pretty fun guy to know.

And thus, it makes sense that Koons might have met with Epstein, even if he had known his background.

Koons is not known for his ethical backbone. He's all about the money, and there's an anything goes sort of attitude that he exudes. He's deeply connected within the New York social scene, but he's also connected to the New York financial scene. His collectors include almost every major collector out of Wall Street. Epstein comes out of that bunch, having made his money, allegedly, in the market.

It might have been actually earned through things like blackmail, but we'll never really know.

His art collection was pretty solid, and while collectors like Benedikt Taschen tend away from Koons in favor of artists like Christopher Wool, Koons was always a major artist for collectors like Allen and Epstein.

The fact is, while Koons ain't the kind of guy to give a damn about where the money comes from, but also it's not likely that Koons was one of Epstein's clients/friends. There's no evidence that he went to Epstein's island, and while there have been whispers

about Koons not being the best guy in the world, Cicciolina divorced him claiming mental and physical abuse, but no one as far as I've ever heard has claimed he was a monster, and I don't believe he was included in the flight logs.

Still, Koons being associated with Epstein, the modern day monster whose crimes are still not fully known and far less understood, shouldn't be a shock, they're different kinds of sharks in the same sea, but it's also unlikely to be anything more than an interest in making money that they shared.





WrestleMania Week

Part Two

I was full of Yoshinoya.

That alone made me happy, but the really important thing, the thing I was most excited for (other than the various food places I was hitting all week) was Bloodsport 9!

You've got an idea of what pro wrestling is. Bloodsport, founded by mixed martial art legend and



incredible amateur wrestling John Barnett, is not that. Well, it is and it isn't. There are no ring ropes. The matches aren't high-flying affairs, they are presented as more legitimate contests. Thus, they're stiff, hard-hitting, and often fairly short. This is a good thing for those of us who remember UWFi or BattleArts in the 1990s. I was excited, since most of the matches had at least one person I was excited to get to see.

The matches included folks I knew I would love to see in this sort of setting. Jeff Cobb, a massive agile former Olympian who won in the opener. There was only one women's match, Killer Kelly vs. Mirina Shafir. Shafir used to do UFC fighting, and was in NXT wrestling, where she just wasn't right for the company. Here, working a snug style with Killer Kelly, she was so damn good. I did get a chance to say hello to her after the show when she was hanging out in front of the UCC between shows.

The one that drew a lot of interest was Kota Ibushi, his first match back after the end of his contract with New Japan and a nine-month layoff, against Mr. Mania Weekend, Speedball Mike Bailey. Most people

were super-excited for Ibushi. I was hyped for Speedball.

And the match was awesome. They certainly worked the Bloodsport style, but Bailey actually did a Moonsault kneedrop that was a flying move that somehow still felt legitimate in the context! This one put everything else on the show to shame...except the main event. While John Moxley and Johnny Bloodsport (aka Johnny Mundo, Johnny Impact, Johnny Nitro, etc., etc.) were big names on the show, the main event was founder Josh Barnett against Timothy Thatcher.

My favorite wrestler in the world is Timothy Thatcher.

I first saw him the last time I went to shows on WrestleMania weekend in 2015, and have seen him several times since he's somewhat local, being headquartered in Sacramento. He works every match as a legitimate battle, far more intricate on the mat than almost anything. He's so good, and he was great in NXT working a style you almost never see in the US.

The two did not disappoint.



It was the kind of match that you need to watch carefully. They spent a lot of the match on their feet, so that every time there was a throw, it really meant something. Every submission hold felt like it could be the finish, but they did 12 minutes of incredible stuff, and Thatcher got the win! I was so happy. Between shows, I drove to my car, charged my phone, and called



Vanessa and the kids. I was tired, but there was another show, though it would be in a couple of hours. I got in line early and talked with some of the folks in line, and when we got in, I noticed they were selling tacos. I bought two. They were wonderful!

The next show was the Japanese promotion DDT. This is one of the most interesting company in the world. They have some of the most talented wrestlers anywhere, Kota Ibushi having been there for years, and also have weird matches, such as the ladder match that was won by the ladder.

The opener was a bizarre, but wonderful, match. It was a tag team match, but the Heavymetalweight championship was also on the line. It's a title you can win at any time, night or day, anywhere.



The Champion, Yoskiahiko, was pinned, and the title changed hands.

Oh...did I mention that Yoshihiko was a doll?

At times, she's controlled by a black-bedecked puppeteer, but mostly it's the opponent who is doing stuff. It's crazy silly, but she was so over with the crowd it was insane.

There was a match that I just didn't cotton to with the Pheromones, who are a team who is entirely defined by assplay. It's slightly less weird than it sounds, but it just wasn't for me.

The biggest match on this one featured Eddie Kingston, an amazing AEW wrestler I had seen in the San Jose New Japan show a few weeks before, and Jun Akiyama, for years my favorite All Japan wrestler who has very rarely worked in the US. Their match was fantastic, even though I have no idea who their opponents were.

The match that closed out the show was one of the best of the entire weekend. Takeshita, one of the best workers in the world, and after Kota Ibushi probably the best worker on all the shows, took on Yuki Ueno. The pair worked so well together, and it was high-flying and incredibly smart, and Takeshita won.



After that, I needed to get back to Derek's, but I stopped at Zankou, the original location in Little Armenia, and ordered a Chicken Tarna. I went home happy.

The next morning I headed to Bob's again, this time for steak and eggs. I saw John Slattery, of Mad Men fame, walking out as I was walking in. I love when I run into stars and they nod at

me. I drank my coffee, and then headed off to the first show, again at the UCC.

The first show was another small local promotion, Jimmy Lloyd's D-Generation F. It was a really fun show that had a much smaller time feel than anything else up to this point. The show opened with a crazy, dive-filled seven person scramble match. It was fun, and the second match was really good too.

But none of them had a talent like Jack Cartwheel.

Jack Cartwheel had been on AEW a few weeks before, but basically, he's a guy who offense is largely based around cartwheel-type moves. He's super-charismatic, athletic, but most of all, he has amazing timing. He won his match, and he stuck out as a much bigger deal than anyone else on the show.

Sawyer Wreck was another big discovery for me. She's a six-two brawler and while she's not particularly fluid, she manages to connect with the crowd really well. She did a match that was almost entirely brawling, and included the first table spot on the shows.

It wasn't a real table shot, but a cheap door placed between two chairs.

The show was fun, but I had plans for lunch, again a flashback to my older days in LA - The House of Pies on Vermont.

I had a steak. My new required diet meant no pie, but the steak was actually pretty good, cooked medium as hell, which I enjoyed. I got corn with it. It was really a reason to flashback on the days with Forry, where you might see Kenneth Anger sitting at a booth. I drank coffee. A lot of coffee. It was going to be a long day.

I got back just in time for the DDT vs GCW (Game Changer Wrestling) which was US vs. Japan. The show was good, another great Jun Akiyama match, and a great 8-man match that featured Jack Cartwheel. There was a good tag team match with Speedball Bailey, but overall, it was only an OK show. The last show I did that day, though, was the big one - Joey Janela's Spring Break. I was so tired, it started late, at about 9pm, but I was determined to see one match. The opener was good, a big scramble match with ladders, but

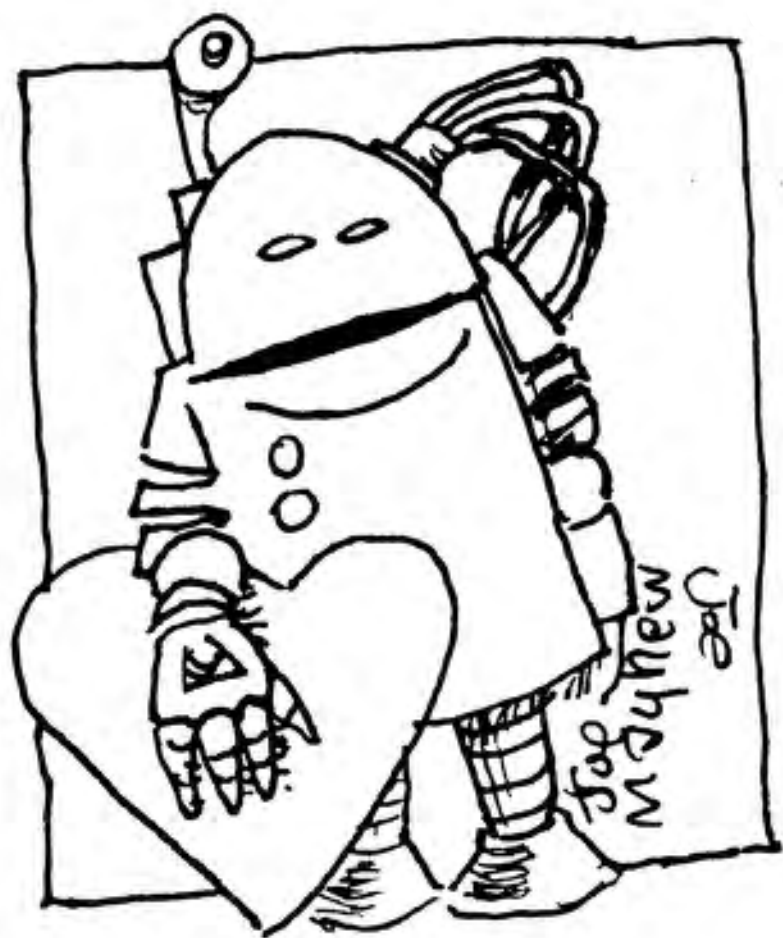
and a really good tag match, but the one match I had to see, even with Kota Ibushi vs. Joey Janela in the main event, was El Hijo del Vikingo vs. Speedball Mike Bailey.

This match delivered on every level. Vikingo is the greatest flyer in the world right now. He works the US a fair bit, and had been in AEW recently. His biggest move is a 630 splash which makes you wonder how someone can do that without a diving board. They went fifteen minutes, and it was incredible. Spulexes, great flying, and amazing precision. Vikingo won with that 630, and after that, I hit the road for my Mom's, 90 minutes down the road.

Along the way, I grabbed Zankou.









The Murder of Brian Wells

Evil Genius, a great three-part Netflix doc, details the insane case of the Erie, Pennsylvania bank robbery by, and later murder of Brian Wells. You might know it as the Collarbomb robbery, but I think the robbery was somewhat secondary.

I truly believe it was meant to kill Brian Wells.

Let's look at a few facts, or at least as close as we can get to any facts in this case, is that there was a meeting at the home of Kenneth Barnes, who would do some time for the crime, where Albert Rothstein and Marge Diehl-Armstrong.

Diehl-Armstrong was a piece of work. People had a nasty habit of turning up murdered when they were associated with her, especially if they were married. Rothstein, an ex-boyfriend of hers, found a body in their freezer and that kinda set the end-game for the crime in

motion. The story goes like this – Diehl-Armstrong wanted to kill her father so that she could inherit his money. This plot, which she was going to use Barnes to carry out, would cost her two hundred and fifty grand. She didn't have that kind of scratch, so they hatched the bomb plot to rob a bank.

So, the group came up with a plan. Rothstein, who was some sort of super-genius, designed a bomb that they would build into a collar that they'd get Wells to wear. Wells would the collar and then he'd rob a bank, getting the 250K that they needed to get Barnes to kill Diehl-Armstrong's dad.

Jessica Hoopsick, a friend of Wells who happened to be a sex worker, apparently provided his name to the crew. He'd be set-up to take the fall, the big fall as it were, and he would be unaware of the plot, but he was pliable and would just go along.

Wells went in to the bank and ended up only coming out with 8K. He left twirling a cane, which was actually a shotgun that had been provided by the team that collared him.

Now, here's where I differ with this idea – if she's telling the truth and he had no real role in the crime, then why did he leave the bank so happy? He had asked for 250K, but only got 8K. It's almost as if he was HAPPY to have that 8K, as if he would be getting a cut of that money.

Hoopsick's got issues as a witness, noticeably that she was a drug addict and claims to have been paid for her information in drugs. That's not to say that all addicts are untrustworthy, but it does give pause. Now, there could be more steps that ended up with Wells being brought in, and not told everything, such as he could have been told that the collar was a convincing fake. They could have said that they wanted the money and would cut him in, and with the fake collar, that was actually a real bomb collar, it would be easy to eliminate another cut of the cane, as it were.

I think he was fully in on it, and Hoopsick may have given them his name, but I can't see how it would work without him being a player.





The (Other) Haldeman Stories – The Thrill of Victory

Jay Haldeman goes Vonnegut!

OK, that's weird, and seems a bit dismissive, but honestly, it's the highest honor I can pay an author, and since it's the author I love more than any other being compared to an author I love more than all but one other, I think it's OK...I hope.

The Thrill of Victory is a take on Vonnegut's legendary short story "Harrison Bergeron." It plays that field, and it does it in a way that is a lot more fun, especially if you know a thing or two the NFL in the 1970s and 80s. The basic premise is this: the NFL has been deemed to too violent and dangerous to be played by actual humans, thus robots are put to the task. Like the Indy 500 (or maybe NASCAR) they strive to have the teams be as even as possible, striving for 6-and-6 sea-

sons. Quarterback Bronco has led his Daytona Beach Armadillos (Go 'Dillos!) have gone 10-and-2, and Bronco is one of those incredible quarterbacks. The brief bit of gameplay we're treated to by Jay shows that Bronco is a bit like Fran Tarkenton or Kenny Stabler. The entire game is ruled by the Rozelle Rule.

That's really funny. Pete Rozelle was the comish for the NFL from 1960 to 1989. He was a major force and it was under his watch that America become a Football country. Things he innovated? Well, bringing the AFL into the NFL, the Super Bowl, and in my eyes the biggest innovation, *Monday Night Football*. He was an incredibly important figure, and when they recite the Rozelle Rule, it is as much a chant as the Liturgy Against Fear. This is hilarious as Rozelle was seen as something of a straight man compared to the bombastic comedian that was Al Davis, former AFL commissioner and owner of the Oakland Raiders.

Turns out that Bronco's programming had been corrupted, as it were, by the addition of a competitor's heart and drive to win. That single addition has taken a team that almost certainly would have been good and made them into 10-and-2 world-beaters.

We'd already seen the best year in the history of the NFL with the Dolphins going 14-0 in 1972. The Patriots came close in 2007, but they lost the Super Bowl, and if you don't win the Big One, it don't count!

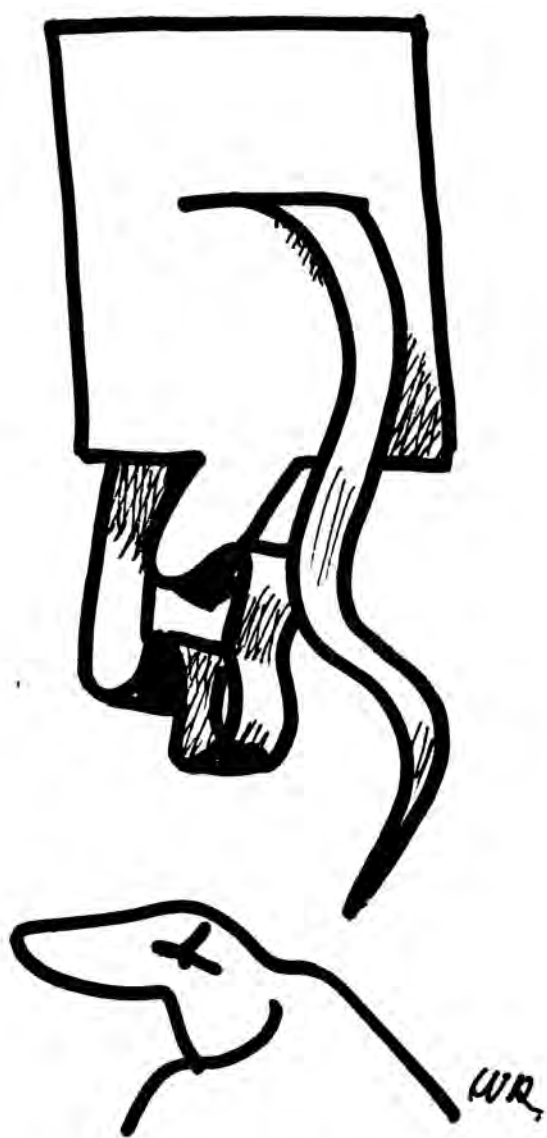
In many ways, the Armadillos of The Thrill of Victory are a lot like the 1976 Oakland Raiders, led by the legendary Kenny Stabler. He was great, and he played with an excess of heart, partly due to the influence of another former Raider QB, the great and incredibly old George Blanda. The team sure feels like it, and the Daytona Beach market would be about the same size as Oakland!

The idea of the level playing field being a downer is the main theme of Vonnegut's story, but it's basis was far more cynical, being a commentary on the accommodation doctrine that had begun popping up around the US at the time of its writing. In *The Thrill of Victory*, it's Haldeman playing with the idea of the leveled playing field in the field that invented the level playing field. The Salary Cap concept helped to enshrine

that into rules (that happened after Rozelle's time, but was already being talked about due to anti-trust suits and conflicts with owners that kept being discussed). He mentions the 'Any Given Sunday' concept that says any team can win any game, but he kinda turns it on its head by using it to justify the winning of 10 games in the season. It's a fun flip!

Now, I have to say something about the very last line of the story. The way it reads to anyone who recognizes the reference might lead you to believe that the whole thing was a shaggy-dog story, a Feghoot, or worse, an excuse to sell a story that ends with a movie reference that nearly everyone 1978 reader would have recognized. To me, that's a bit too loose a reading. It's a story that says something that ends with a good 'un.



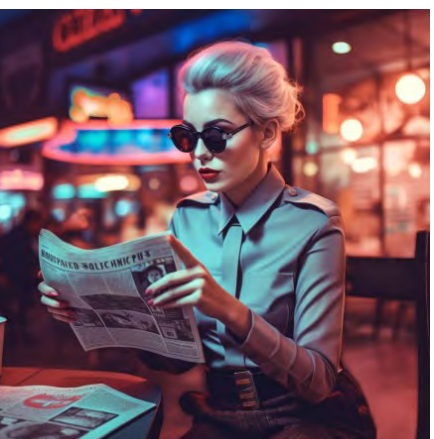


SLIPPERY

One Cup of Prompt—Coffee, Fanzines, True Crime

An AI Art Sampler by MidJourney









The Second Band I Ever Saw Live

Cardinal Cox

because the first was support act Ludus fronted by Linder Sterling and I'm 14 (March 1979) (1) and older punks – guys on the scene for three years – swagger round spitting and I'm in front of the left-hand speaker stack in the sports hall more usually frequented for roller skating – not that I went more than a couple of times as it weren't my scene – and four skinny guys come out to make the most wonderful noise – my eyeballs shake in my head and rainbows fill the edges of my vision and I

pogo

pogo

pogo

pogo

pogo

pogo

pogo

pogo

and it don't matter that I'm fat or ginger or spotty or anything else that's wrong with me (2)

yeah about now you might be hoping for some revelation or turn around or twist in the tail but it ain't coming – I didn't have any revelation or discover anything about myself and at the end of the evening ^[3] I avoided the skinheads looking for a fight and my Dad picked me up and drove me home ^[4]

- 1—My older brother gave me a copy of Another Music in a Different Kitchen, so I'd perhaps know some of the tunes – later I inherited many of his singles including the first half dozen Buzzcocks – including an original Spiral Scratch
- 2—Anthropologists note in tribal cultures the adolescent male going into the wilderness to confront some noisy terror as a rite of passage
- 3—Plain clothes cops sipping plastic pints make mental lists of everything going on
- 4—Who reads footnotes anyway?



Me and The Buzzcocks

By Chris

I discovered The Buzzcocks twice.

I was maybe 7. I had a record collection that featured dozens of records from all over. I had *Ramona and Her Father*, an audio book based on the work of Beverly Cleary. I had all the Beatles albums. Jim Croce. Gordon Lightfoot. Disco Duck. Michael Jackson's *Off the*

Wall. Sesame Street records. Steve Martin's *Wild and Crazy Guy*.

And, of course, *Never Mind The Bullocks*.

There were Clash records, and at least one Television record. I remember listening to *I Wanna Be Your Dog* on a 45.

And thus, I was 7 or so and there was a record that my Dad had bought and left it in my room with my record player. I used me record player more often than he used the one in the living room (he used his trucks 8-track player most often) so this made sense. One day, I put it on, no idea what I was about to listen to.

It was a driving, peppy, and joyous song. Even then I knew this was like the music that Dad loved from the 50s—Richy Valens, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis. It was a song that was guitar and 'harmonies and joy. I adored the song, and I'm pretty sure I listened to it nearly as often as I did *Rubber Ducky* from Sesame Street.

That 45 was *Love You More* by The Buzzcocks.

I basically stopped listening to The Buzzcocks for a long time. It wasn't until the late 1990s that I started listening to much 70s and 80s punk other than Dead Kennedies or Bad Religion (and a little stuff that kinda skirted the edges of punk) but I was viewing films for Cinequest one year and a strange piece that sounded like something familiar came across my desk. It was a short film directed by Sam Taylor-Wood.

Now, Wood's work I knew because she was one of the YBA, the Young British Artists who came out of Goldsmiths and featured a rakish combination of hucksters and geniuses. You had the first tier, folks like Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst and Marcus Harvey and Gillian Wearing, and you had the others, like Fiona Rae and Gary Hume. Sam was on that later list, but that's

still a good list to be on in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Anyhoo, the story is of a kid who meets a girl in a record store, and they go back to her place to listen to the new record. They put it on and...

...wait for it...

...it's *Love You More*!

Now, the short is called *Love You More*, and it's basically what got her the director chair for films like *Nowhere Man* and *Fifty Shades of Grey*. It's a sexy short, and a smart one, and a kinda youth-affirming one.

But it's also a musical one, and it brought me all the way back!

Since that point, I've been listening to a lot of The Buzzcocks. *24 Hour Party People* also helped on that front. They really were as close to The Ramones as the UK ever produced.



OK, that's that!

There'll be more of these, who knows for how long, or if they'll change, or if I just like doin' 'em and I'll keep 'em coming! It does kinda remind me of the 2007 era of *The Drink Tank* more than anything, though back then I didn't drink coffee.

Page 15 art was by Joe Mayhew, may he rest in peace, and Page 22 by Bill Rotsler, and may he also rest in peace!

The photo on page 26 was by Luiz Alberto Fiebig Junior. The till on page 30 was from Sam Taylor-Johnson's *Love You More*.

I did the rest using MidJourney.







Claims Department

Art Created by Chris using MidJourney

Prompts

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
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| Surrealist coffee—2, 35 | Coffee and Poetry—30 |
| Mystic Coffee—4, 5 | Coffee stare—32 |
| Coffee and Zines—6 | Empty convention center coffee—33 |
| Coffee Hawaii—7 | The beauty of Coffee—37, 55 |
| Coffee and television—9, | Pixx—38, 41 |
| Coffee and Woman watching television—11, 13, 14, 34 | Coffee Fashion—42-50 |
| Coffee and a trim—17 | Deathball Monsters—51 |
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Cover—Chris using MidJourney [Prompt—Drinking coffee with fish]

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Page 17—I Trimmed My Beard

Page 19: Art by Chris using MidJourney—Prompt: Statuesque Coffee

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Page 55—Alright, that's enough



Coffees Drank While Writing Articles

Tully's Hawaiian Blend—*Welcome* (Forever Saroyan Office, May 5)

Starbucks Light Roast—*The National Video Registry Part 1* (Forever Saroyan Office, May 8)

Jenna Sue's Sumatran Light Roast — *I Trimmed My Beard*, *Prompt: Coffee Fashion* (Chris's bedroom, May 6)

Dunkin Donut's Original Roast—*Mania Week Part the Last* (Forever Saroyan Office, May 10)

Peet's Major Dickinson's Roast—*Writing Poetry, Convention Cancellations*, *Prompt: Coffee Fashion* (Peet's Coffee, Saratoga, CA, May 11)

Kauai Coffee Vanilla Macadamia Nut—*Discovering Pixx* (Forever Saroyan office, May 7) *The (Other) Haldeman Stories*, *Alright, That's Enough* (Forever Saroyan Office, May 12)







Welcome to the third Coffee Issue!

I'm getting ready for Hawaii, which is where I'll likely be when this finally gets released. These are coming pretty fast these days, which I did not expect.

This issue has a lot of the same stuff, I'm about to wrap up Mania week coverage, and after that, I'll be writing a bit there, but probably not too much...unless I can write and hot tub at the same time.

The last few weeks have been hard as far as sleep goes. The youngest hasn't slept well, probably a reaction to their new medications, and that's meant that we don't

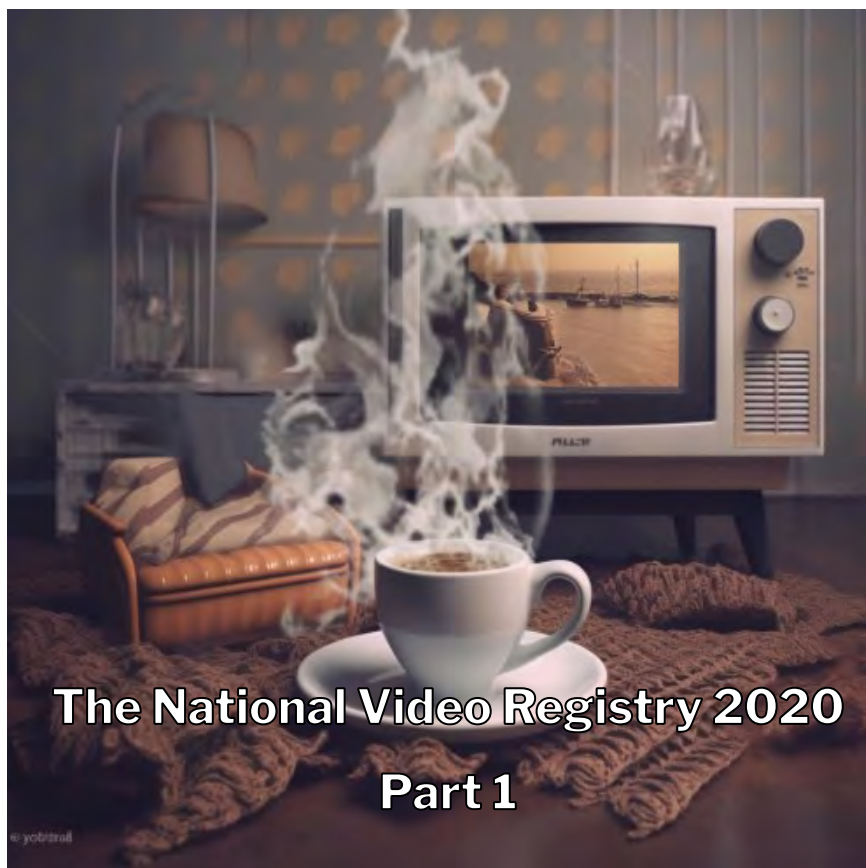


sleep well. Last night, I set us all up on the couch, and we snuggled until they fell asleep about 9pm, early when you consider the previous two nights had been 2:30 and 3am nights.

I just found out that the condo we're staying at in Maui has a Keurig coffee maker. GAME CHANGER!!!

This issue will start with a look at an idea I had ages ago, follow that up with ground I've plowed before, and then PIXX!





The National Video Registry 2020

Part 1

OK, it's back.

Way back in 2019, I did a National Video Registry. There's a National Film Registry, which covers movies of all types, and National Recording Registry, which is audio recordings of all types, but nothing for Television, VHS, Webvideos, flash, and more. So, I figured I'd start it.

The first list was published WAY BACK in 2019. It covered a wide range of shows from the 1940s through early 2000s.

In fact, they were -

The Ed Sullivan Show
Fireside Theatre
Laugh-In
Wide, Wide World of Sports
The Moon Landing
The Exploding Whale clip
Texaco Star Theatre
The Tonight Show
The Max Headroom Intrusion
I Love Lucy
The Cosby Show
Philco Television Playhouse
Ali vs. Spinks
Game 7 of the 1960 World Series
WrestleMania III
The first 24 hours of MTV
All in the Family
The Assassination of Lee Harvey Oswald
The Flintstones
Star Trek
The Twilight Zone
Meet The Press
Saturday Night Live
Camera 3
9/11 Coverage

Admittedly, that list is all over the place, but it hits a lot of the important social buttons, many artistic buttons, and certainly has a heavy dip of myself in there too.. What in this world can exist without bias???



I made lists for 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, and only now am going to write about them, one cup of coffee at a time, starting with the 2020 list!

Rodney King Beating footage

Let's start with Cultural impact. The video taken of the beating of Rodney King set a series of events in motion that would change political and racial discourse in America pretty much forever. It affected the 1992 Presidential election. It led to the trial that led to the verdict that led to the riots that redefined race relations in LA and also helped to turn the city into a much more militant place. It

was arguably the most important home video footage ever shot. The footage was created by George Holliday, and the Feds, I believe the FBI, still has the original tapes, which I think would mean eventually they'll be turned over to the National Archives.

Roots

Roots was the mini-series based on Alex Haley's book that was a massive ratings hit, one of the most watched programs of all-time, and also started a discussion in television about American history. It launched the career of LeVarr Burton, and watching it recently, the acting so was much better than typical 1970s television fare. There were follow-ons and related works, It's collected at all the major television archives.

The 700 Club

The rise of modern evangelicalism in America ended up changing the way a lot of people viewed TV. Since the beginning, there's been religion on the air, but typically they were either local or rather simply produced, usually regular sermons/revivals shot and presented live. Billy Graham was big into that. The 700 Club turned the whole idea of Christian television on its head. Started by Pat Robertson, it's long-association with Robertson, but was hosted by Jim Bakker, and Robertson when it began in 1966. The show evolved, and when Cable TV took off, it was launched into new heights. It brought the magazine format to the Christian TV world, launched imitators, arguably starting with Bakker's *The PTL Club*,

The Honeymooners

Jackie Gleason was a massive star, and *The Honeymooners* was an off-shoot of *Cavalcade of Stars*, and then *The*

Jackie Gleason Show when Gleason left The DuMont for Paley's CBS. The amazing thing, considering the cultural impact it had: it only lasted one season.

Sesame Street

There is no question that this is the most important educational program in history. It's changed American television, and has been exported around the world. The characters have become a major part of American zeitgeist, and the ideas that the show has espoused the entire time have taught a generation. It's also revived interest in puppetry, and has had several major cultural touchstone moments, like the death of Mr. Hooper.





The ANTA Show of 1955

CARE is a charity that gives remittances to Europe. It was founded after WWII. ANTA, American National Theatre & Academy, put on an early version of telethon, but also was shown in movie theatres as a way to raise funds. It was fairly successful, and the broadcast side, done on DuMont, was one of the best of the early telethons and had a massive influence. Perhaps most importantly, it was full of impressive performers, Barbara Bel Geddes, Lena Horne, Ben Gazzara, Helen Hayes, and others, and writers, including William Saroyan. It's held at UCLA's archives.

The Bones Brigade skateboarding videos

These videos are fascinating when you look at what happened in the decades since. These videos, produced by Powell-Peralta skateboard company, the important videos in the series were released from 1984 to 1991.

The Bones Brigade Video Show (1984)

Future Primitive (1985)

The Search for Animal Chin (1987)

Public Domain (1988)

Axe Rated (1988)

Ban This (1989)

Propaganda (1990)

Eight (1991)

Celebrity Tropical Fish (1991)

These videos changed the world of skating, and made stars out of the skaters that appeared, including Steve Caballero, Mike McGill, Lance Mountain, and more than anyone else, an incredibly young Tony Hawk. These were not simply straight ahead documenting of skating, but they had music, skits, and some animation. *Future Primitive* is easily the best of the them as far as antics goes. *The Search for Animal Chin* has a storyline exactly as thin but present as any porn video. The connection between skating and punk rock was already established when these came out, but they were forever cemented. The initial video was only expected to sell about 300 copies - more than 30,000 were sold in the first year.





I trimmed my beard.

I used to go to the barber around the corner from Evelyn's Gramma's house, but it's been yeas. Now, I trim myself.

Using office scissors.

It should be no surprise that there are costs involved with going to a barber. Even if you get what you pay for, some of us can't afford to get what you would have to pay for, so we gotta do it ourself.

I have a trimmer at home, but there are two prob-

lems. The first is that using a mirror at home means being over the sink, and our sinks are not hair friendly if we want them to drain at all. Our plumbing, somehow, is at least a century older than the century-old house we inhabit. The other problem is that this beard is thick, dense, tangled, and unmanageable. I would seriously stress out the trimmers giving it a go.

So, the last couple of years, I've had to trim at work, using the scissors in the drawer of my desk.

The odd thing is, since I can watch in the mirror in the bathroom that only I use.

I've gotten pretty good at it, and what's really strange isn't that I do it, but when. It's never a *Summer is coming up, I better get shorn scenario, but more a Huh, it's been a while...* thing.

And often, neither the wife nor kids will notice for days, and sometimes weeks!







Mania Week— Part the Last

I got to snuggle Vanessa.

I got to my Mom's about Midnight, belly still full of Zankou. The Chicken Tarna really is glorious, and even with the extreme amount of garlic I ate, I was in heaven as I pulled in, and headed into the bedroom. Mom always sleeps on the couch when we visit (and I'm told a fair chunk of the time we don't) so Vanessa, who had flown



down with the kids a few hours before, was in bed. I spooned my sweet darling who I hadn't seen since I left, since I watched 6 wrestling shows, since I ate at Bob's, Anderson's, Zankou, House of Pies, all of it. The kids were actually largely awake when I got there, but they settled down and fell asleep pretty quick.

In the morning, Vanessa had an early flight back, but I still managed to wake up about 5, make her coffee, and kiss her goodbye. The kids woke up about an hour before I left, so I made them breakfast, yogurt and fruit, and then went to Starbucks and got Bella a coffee.

My seven year old loves coffee, and only gets any about three times a year.

I ate left over chicken from the night before, and then drove back to the Ukrainian Culture Centre for the final show I'd be seeing—Effy's Big Gay Brunch.

Now, the is kinda misleading. No, not the Effy part, he's a popular wrestler on the indy scene who incorporated an out-and-tough act that drew major attention. No, not the gay part, almost every performer was some variety of queer. No, not the big, I believe this was the show that had the most individual performers on it.

The lie was the Brunch. There was no brunch, but a show that starts at 10am deserves to be called a brunch, I guess.

The show was great. A few of the stars from earlier shows were on it, notably Sawyer and Dark Sheik, and a guy who I loved named Mike Parrow.



Now, Mike is a giant human being, kinda scary lookin', but he's just about the nicest guy I've ever met. I talked to him for about twenty minutes the night before. He's a super-talent, and even did a brief with spot with the Yoshhiko. the doll who is also a wrestling champion. He and Effy

were two of the driving forces for the current queer wrestling explosion, and showed up in my buddy Ry's movie *Out in the Ring*. He was in the main event with Effy, who ended up so bloody by the finish that I don't think I've ever seen anyone as geeked as that in person. It was a fun show, and I'm glad I made the trip for this single show, driving three hours round trip for a two hour show.



Because WrestleMania Night one was coming!

WrestleMania itself was in LA, but I had promised JP that I would watch Mania with him at Gramma's house. I used to love watching wrestling with my dad, so I said OK. Besides, WrestleMania tickets were super-expensive. I drove back, NOT stopping at Zankou! I did buy a bag of nuts when I stopped to buy gas, though.

Getting back to Mom's, the kids were actually gone, headed off to Palm Springs for a bit. I enjoyed some rest, made myself a small lunch, then watched the NXT show that ran in the morning. NXT is the development league for WWE and it's had some of the greatest matches in wrestling history. In recent months, it hadn't been at that level, but there's still a whole lot of talent there. The show was really good, and I'm glad I took the time.



Just as the show ended, the kids came home and they were happy to see their Papa! We cuddled up on the couch and watched some cooking shows (we love *Guy's Grocery Games!*) and waited for Mania to start.

JP wanted his secret stew.

I'm about to spill the beans on that.

JP's secret stew is, as he tells it 'Steak with onions, carrots, potatoes, and delicious seasonings.'

That's a pretty basic stew, and I've made it for him five or six times, never the same way twice, but always he says "perfect like always, Pops!"

This is roughly the recipe for this one.

Brown two pounds of stew meat in a little bit of oil, adding a touch of salt and pepper. When it's all brown, add carrots and celery and cook that together for a few minutes. Then add a box of beef bone broth, and squeeze in those tubes of crushed garlic, onion, add some Worcestershire sauce, add Italian seasoning, thyme, and lemon pepper. Bring to a boil briefly, then turn to medium-low heat for an hour or so, then add 1 1/2 cubed potatoes. Cook it all until the potatoes are tender.

Here's the real trick—using a slotted spoon, take out the chunky stuff and set it into a large bowl for a bit. Bring the remaining liquid to a boil, then add a cup of good red wine (we tend towards a sweet red, in this case a decent Syrah) and then make a slurry with a tablespoon of cornstarch and the hot liquid. Add it to the liquid and stir until it's thickened. It shouldn't be THICK but certainly less thin. Add a mess load of pepper, and a little more garlic paste. Add the chunky stuff back in and let it come down to a reasonable temperature before serving.

JP said "Perfect, like always, Pops!"

We watched Mania, enjoying the stew.

The show itself was really good, with an amazing main event where Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens won the World Tag Team Championship. There was a woman's match between my favorite, Rhea Ripley, and Charlotte Flair, that was really good too, told a great story, and showed that they were able to clearly headline with this feud on a show like this if they were given the chance. The show was really good, with lots of spectacle, though JP mostly just played with his tablet.

We then went to bed. I was pooped. There was a Lucha show at the UCC, but I was way too tired to make the round trip.

The next morning, we all woke up, I drank three things of coffee. Mom made bacon for us all, pancakes for the kids, and cashews, raspberries, and bacon for me. That's a great breakfast as far as I'm concerned. We then headed to the San Bernadino County Museum. It's a real-





ly good science/local history museum. They have a lot of fossils found in the area, so they had skeletons! They also had a nice exhibit on oranges and the business that grew up around them.

After that, we went and grabbed lunch. There are a lot of places in Beau-

mont, in the middle of the SoCal mountainside desert region, but the best are almost all Mexican places. We grabbed tacos, and boy were they good! Maybe not Zankou good, but good enough that I was happy to eat 'em!

WrestleMania night 2 was on later, but I spent the time in-between taking a long bath with Epsom salts, watching *Bob's Burgers*, our family's favorite grown-up cartoon, working on *Journey Planet*, because when am I not?, and planning dinner. This time, dinner was a massive chicken, mashed sweet potatoes, cauliflower (which I skipped) and a really nice quesadilla that Bella asked for but only ate half of. It wasn't a bad meal at all.

The second night was better than the first when it came to wrestling action. The three-way Intercontinental championship match between Gunther, the 6'4 massive wall of a man who had been champ for nearly a year, Drew McIntyre, 6'4 or so and made of muscle, and Sheamus, a 6'6 or so pasty white Irish feller who is also buff beyond all reason. The match was hard-hitting and perfectly placed on the show. These guys can all go, and go they did.

The woman's title match between Bianca Belair and Asuka was really good too.



The main event was good, but really, it ended with Cody Rhodes losing to the long-term champ Roman Reigns, which was unexpected, but also not at all unexpected. The crowd kinda felt deflated by the ending, though the match was really good.

After that, bed. It was a good day.

I woke up, called Vanessa to let her know that I would be home about 7. I Played

with the kids a little, made them breakfast, and packed up the car. I'd be flying down in a few days to pick the kids up and fly back with 'em, but they had Gramma and Auntie Susie all to themselves for a few days.



The trip was great. LA means something special to me, it always has, since I was a kid. The places I went all had ties to important things in my life. Bob's with my Dad, House of Pies with Forry and the Harrys, Zankou with my book, and of course, my kids, waiting for me to share the things I loved to do with my Dad.

They're a wonderful pair of beastlings, but after waiting 40 years to have 'em, and being told I'd never have my own for about 20 of those years, I can't imagine life without 'em.

I drove home, up 101. I stopped at a Golden Corral. I've only ever eaten at one once, and it was a short trip. I ate well, my only meal between Beaumont and Boulder Creek, 8 hours of driving. I stopped for gas once. I stopped for a bottle of water once. I stopped to download a new audiobook, a great one by famed criminal profiler John Douglas about the famous cases like Jack the Ripper, JonBenet Ramsey, The Zodiac, and Black Dahlia. It wasn't light listening, but it was enlightening.



We did a *Drink Tank* about poetry.

I've written poetry for decades, and I've only had a few of them published. I'm also a fan of gimmick literary zines. In the 1990s, there was *From Parts Unknown* that published work about masked wrestling that included some incredible writers writing very different work that you'd never see anywhere else.

Now, there is *Taco Bell Quarterly*.

TBQ is an online magazine that actually pays for poetry – 100 bucks a poem. Reading it the first time, I

was struck by the seriousness that was all over it, as well as the humor. These were writers who somehow discussed things like the consistency of a taco shell and how it related to the death of their father, or the importance of a drive-thru. I've loved every issue they've put out, with both heavy thought and heavy irony. It's that amazing middle-brow sweet spot that I wish I could live in.

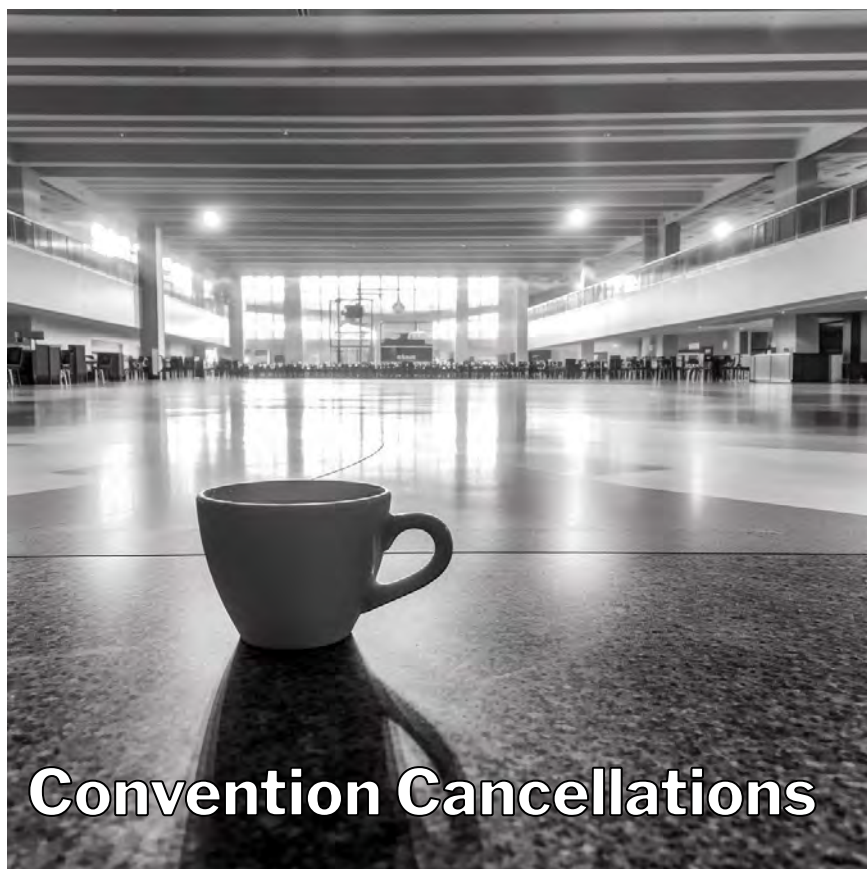
So, I wrote some stuff and submitted it.

While I've tended towards appropriation poetry in recent years, this time I wrote a poem about me and JP and him asking questions about my dad. It's a 100% true story, even happened in a Taco Bell. It's the kind of thing that I'd put in here, it took me far less than a single cup of coffee, but at the same time, I think it's got something bigger to say if it were to appear among pieces that explore the cultural phenomena that is Taco Bell.

I say, straight-out, that Taco Bell is more than a little responsible for the increase in acceptance of Chicanos in America, in much the same way Italian restaurants and especially pizza joints were responsible partly for turning around views on Italians in America. I'd love to write a piece about that, but honestly it probably would require better research than I'm willing to give it.

Still, I hope they accept my poem. If they don't, I can crap out another one before their deadline I bet.





Convention Cancellations

Two cons gone.

In a single week, two cons announced they were cancelling: SiliCon and Westercon. These were both coming later in the year, though WesterCon was imminent with a July 4th weekend date. These are both sad, Gail Carriger was going to be the WesterCon Guest of Honor and Vanessa and I had planned on going, and I hoped to do a book giveaway at SiliCon. The best laid plans, as it were.

The reasons for both aren't exactly clear at the moment, but there are clues in both cases. Immediately after the announcement, SiliCon changed all its branding to remove references to Adam Savage, Mythbuster and their spiritual leader the last couple of years. This has been read as Adam jumping ship when it became obvious that the convention was not financially solvent, but there's no proof of that out there. Same time, it could be that the tail wagged the dog and Adam leaving for some other reason led to the group cancelling, which could also be the case.

WesterCon is a different, and more recent, story.



Kevin Standlee mentioned that it was a money thing, and that makes sense. I love WesterCons, though it's been ages since I've been to one. I think it's time to come up with a Westercon thing that differentiates it from anything else and can be combined with an existing event. Like what, you say? Well, easy ideas WesterCon awards of some sort, a large-scale event of the kind that other cons typically don't do (I'm thinking like a symposium or festival or something that is 'WesterCon' even if it's a part of another convention) or maybe even just plant it in LA (or anywhere, really) on July 4th weekend and have different teams come in and run it there. That



last idea is good because it shows that the difference between teams running a con can mean more than the location of that con.

Three of my all-time favorite cons were Wester-Cons, including what I consider to be the one that really defined what a Garcia Fanzine Lounge would look like (that would be the one at the San Mateo Marriott in 2007) and the one that I think represented the peak of those Lounges (the WesterCon in Sacramento.) I was also a Guest of Honor at one, one of my all-time favorite honors because if you look at the list of other WesterCon GoHs, it reads like a list of folks I love and respect. I do hope that we figure out something, though turning into an annual party at my place might be fun!







Discovering PIXX

Road trips are for listening.

When I was a teenager, driving down with friends to see The Ackermansion or just to walk around Hollywood, I'd make mixtapes for the drive. When I started making that drive, or up to Seattle, or over to Vegas to see the Vegrants, I'd make a CD or two full of songs I'd ripped from my collection or downloaded from Napster or LimeWire. In recent years, it's been Spotify playlists, though I do tend to lean more heavily on podcasts (to LA, it's often Karina Longworth's *You Must Remember This*

series on Charles Manson's Hollywood or Last Podcast on the Left talking about Norwegian Black Metal) and audiobooks (my Cozy Mysteries article in The Drink Tank was largely listened to on my four drives to and from Beaumont over the last few months) but there's always been a playlist for every trip.

Except for one...

I was driving to LA the week after I'd been laid-off from the Museum. I was hurting bad, I basically lost the job that I had become identified with for so long and really wanted to be the one I retired from (well, basically wanted it until the day I die because I know as well as anyone else that I'll never be able to retire). I drove down, my new iPhone, less than a month old, on the seat next to me, USB cabled to the stereo system.

I hadn't had a chance to make a playlist.

Now, Spotify has a ton of pre-made playlists, and a bunch of radio station-like thingees. I chose a playlist, Random Electronic Women, which sounded very cool. It had La Roux, who I've written about, and it had a few other groups that I had certainly heard of, so I figured I'd download the list and give it a listen.

About six songs in, everything changed.

The song was *Everything's Weird in America*.

"To the outside world, we must look so small, because down here, we think our towers are tall."

That line alone brought them to the deep, poetry loving portion of my mind. I actually pulled over and

looked into the songs metadata.

Pixx, the album, *Age of Anxiety*.

Truly, not since hearing La Roux blaring from the neighbor's party had my musical life been so changed.

Pixx is Hannah Rogers, a singer-songwriter who is somewhat steeped in the folksy world of the late 1980s, but firmly in the electronic world of the early 1990s. The sound is incredibly fresh while also feeling like a flashback. The way Arcade Fire works with synths in their later work has a similar feeling. The lyrics are so strong, and she 100% has the Harlan Ellison tendency to open so strong that you're still kinda reeling when you get to where they want the story to go.

Her songs are tinged with science fiction, but moreover, they're incredibly in-touch with the moment and the potential of the world to collapse at any given moment. The title *The Age of Anxiety* is apt considering that there is a general sense of someone screaming into the oncoming storm. The songs are dancey, they have a Roland-808 feel to them, and her voice is silky at times, and at others plays with a staccato rhythm that feels as if it is as influenced by the drum machine and synths as the words she's communicating.

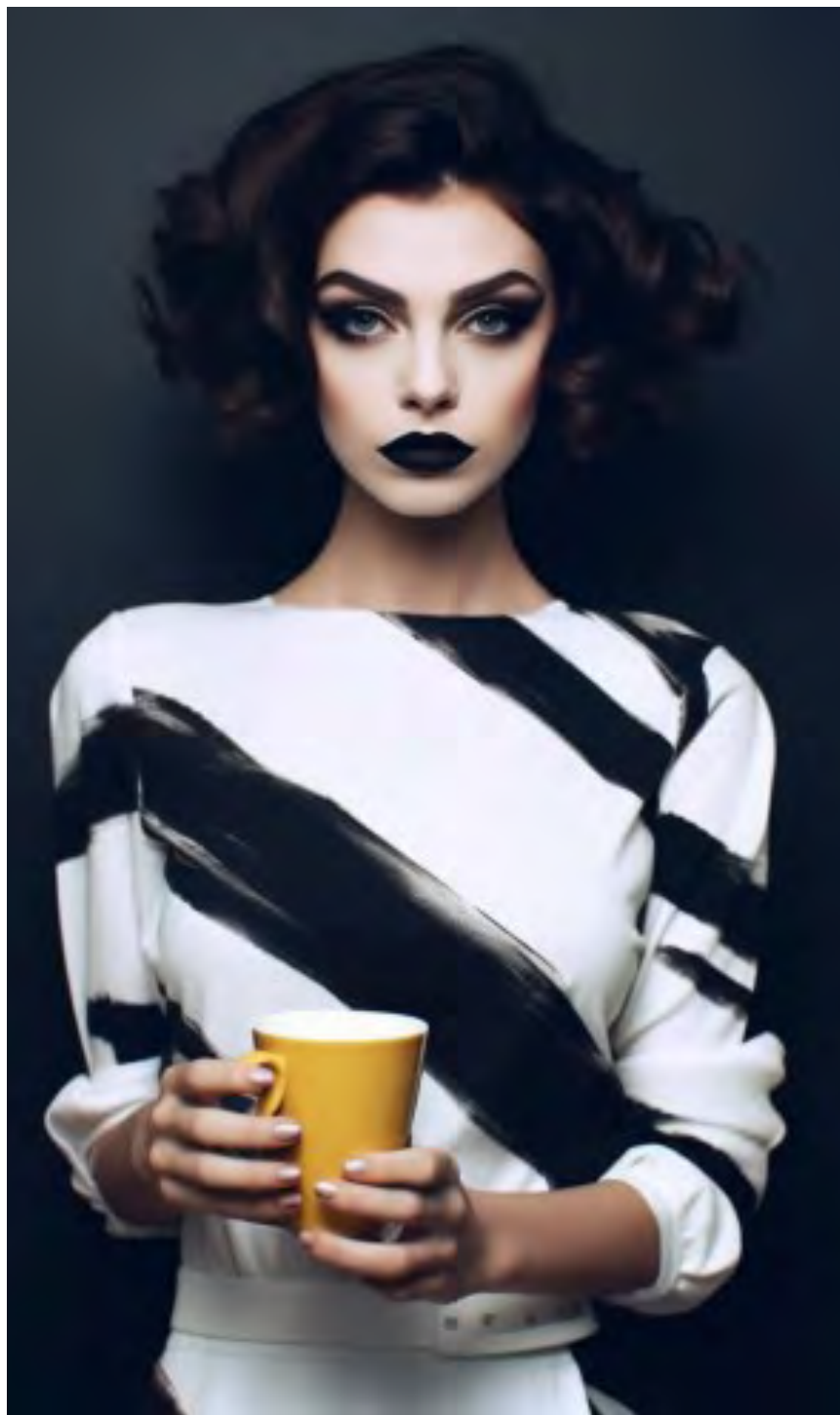
I downloaded both Pixx albums and put them into heavy rotation. It was the kind of music that speaks to me because there's an abstractness to the core message that is purely emotional. Not romantic, or intellectual, or really about anything other than feeling things. It's non-specific, and heavy at times, but powerful. That anxiety

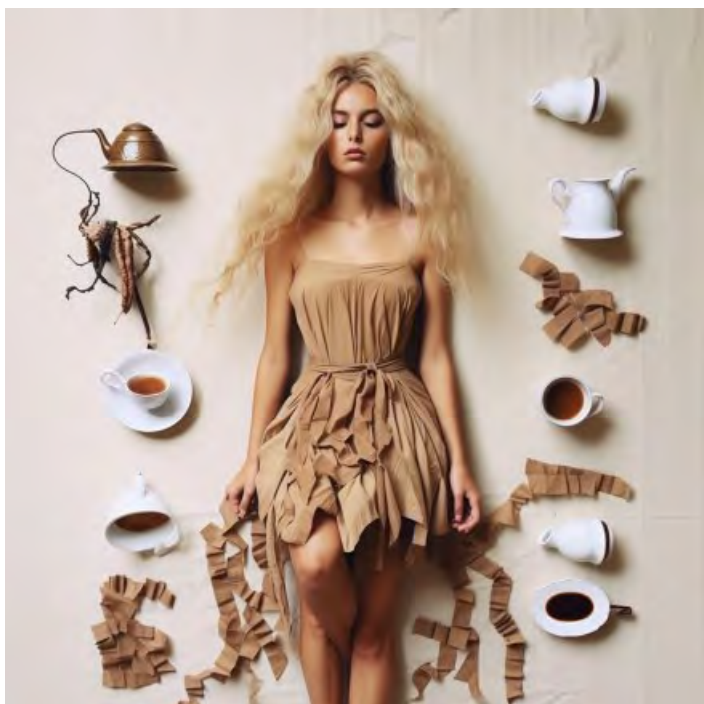
you can feel in much of it isn't directed as much as it is experienced wholly. That's a tough thing to go through, I should know, but it's an even harder thing to communicate. Pixx does that.





Prompt: Coffee Fashion



















The (Other) Haldeman Stories

The Tale of Two Cities

This is a story is a condemnation.

That may seem a bit of a big statement, but it's 100% true. It's a condemnation of the role that sports have taken in American society, about the dangerous conditions of these sports and the bloodlust of the fanbases, about loyalty and enforcement of same, and most of all, it's about the Baltimore Colts.

So, let's come back to the Colts a little later.

The story features a feller who is on the run. The entire population of 150,000 (exactly) is being relocated

from their home planet to another. The reason? The Deathball League has traded the teams for two cities on two different planets because the economics are better with the switch. Now, it's Rigel-IV and their Rangers that are the Champions of the Deathball League three years running. Our 'hero' Tad has decided that his team, his champions, and won't leave. He'll run to the Wastelands and hang out. Anything to not leave his beloved team behind and be shipped (well, *Star Trek*-style transported) to Sirius III and their cellar-dwelling team.

The League is presented as the over-arching controllers of the worlds, and can basically do whatever they want. This has to be a commentary on the role that Football, in particular, had taken in American life at the time. The NFL, and in the south College Football, was a way of life and permeated every interaction a lot of people had. This has changed, but I can remember when what defined you was whether you were a Raiders or a '9ers fan.

Now, one of the things that Jay is talking about here is that in this culture, everyone is given everything, but only so long as they're using it. It's a Socialist (possibly communist?) semi-utopia. It's entirely based around post-scarcity, though the basis of the story is the uneven economics, which is something that the NFL had been talking about for about a decade at the point the story was written in 1980.

The Commissioner, who is clearly modeled on the legendary Pete Rozelle, holds massive power, and deals with things himself. He even comes to take care of Tad

himself.

In the end, well, you can't fight city hall, or the Commish's Office, I guess. Tad is sent and there's an ending that is somewhat unsatisfying.

OK, back to the Baltimore Colts.

The Colts wanted to move, and Indianapolis really wanted them to move there. The city of Baltimore wanted them to stay, and made some court maneuvers to keep 'em. In the dead of night, March 29th, 1984, the team up and vanished. The offices were emptied, and within days they were up and running in Indy.

Now, this story is really important because it's 100% about that event, demonstrating every key point by reversing it and laying it bare.

Of course, that would be true if it had been written BEFORE the Colts made their move.

Much like the Salary Cap theme in *The Thrill of Victory*, Haldeman saw these issues coming and wrote about them. He certainly didn't know the Colts were gonna move like they did, but he could see the league and teams moving in those directions.

This is a wonderful story, and with these years of look-back available to us, it tells many stories about things that wouldn't happen until well after Jay was gone from the world. That's the sign of a great, and observant writer. Not only timelessness, but forward timefulness.



Alright, that's enough.

This issue was a lot of fun, and since I'm working on an anthology at work, and we're in a holding pattern on it, I've got lots of time.

The kids' sleep schedule is also helping.

To get them to sleep at a reasonable hour, I put them in my and Vanessa's bed, tuck 'em in, and play 'em music while I work on the laying out of the stuff I've written throughout the day. They fall asleep in about an hour, and I carrying the sleeping child up to their bed, or to the couch, depending on how much stuff they've tossed on to their floor. It gives me plenty of time to get this done.

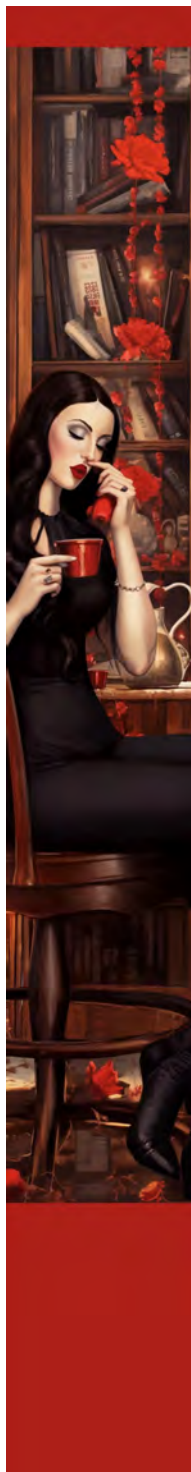
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[Welcome Back](#)

Coffee Drank: Kauai Vanilla Macadamia Nut

[2020 National Film Registry—Part 2](#)

Coffee Drank—Kona Coffee French Roast

[Twitter & TikTok and The Search for Another](#)

Coffee Drank— Jenna Sue's Light Sumatran

[Flying to Hawaii](#)

Coffee Drank—Starbucks Blonde Roast

[My John Adams](#)

Coffee Drank—Lion Coffee Gold Roast

[Prompt: Minimalism Coffee](#)

Coffee Drank—Lion Coffee Gold Roast

[The \(Other\) Haldeman Story—The Agony of Defeat](#)

Coffee Drank—Lion Coffee Gold Roast

[JP Loves Steak](#)

Coffee Drank—Kona Coffee French Roast

[Enough of That!](#)

Coffee Drank—Kona Coffee French Roast

Other coffees drank while creating the art

Jenna Sue's Costa Rica Light Blend

Peet's Major Dickinson's Blend

Kona Coffee French Roast

Whatever the hell they served me at the Airport...





WELCOME BACK!

As I work on this, I am in Hawaii. I hadn't been to Hawaii since I was 5 or so, and it is nice to be back.

This issue won't be any different than the last three; they do have coffee in Maui, though there's likely to be a little more Hawaiian content, no?

My packing for the trip has been fairly different. We've got a Condo in Maui, on the other side of the island from Vanessa's dad and brother, and my Mom came with us, so we could cook. First night we went out and got food from Safeway, We ended up having burgers for lunch that held us over 'til bedtime, when we simply had some pre-roasted chicken and mushrooms. Then tonight, steak...







2020 National Video Registry

Part 2

PART TWO IS HERE!

Last time, it was the Rodney King video, The 700 Club, Roots, Sesame Street, The ANTA Show, and Bones Brigade Video.

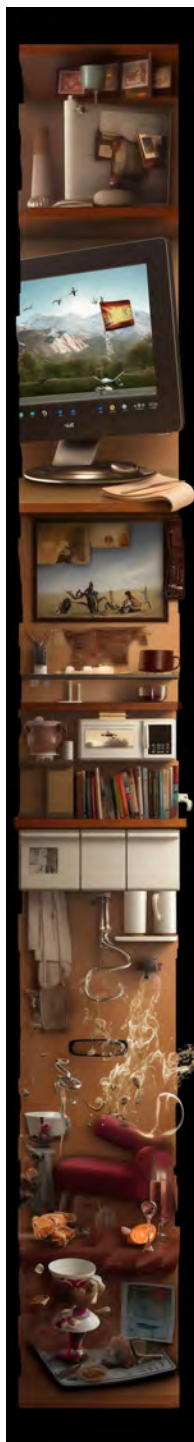
This rouns features more crime, news, a bit of the best drama ever shot for TV, a big ol' dollop of Game Show, and one of the iconic characters in the history of television.

OJ Simpson Chase

There's no question that the footage of the White Bronco driving on the LA Freeways was a defining image of the 1990s, as much as the Rodney King video, but also defining the new kind of news that was being pushed. LA news is now chock full of car chase reports, and this one shows an important moment where the world was watching, either shaking their head, or cheering OJ on.

CBS Nightly News

This news program has had some of the most iconic anchors of all-time, and really helped to define what network news was. Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite, and Dan Rather all played a massive part in the way Americans stayed up to date, and even helped to inform American opinions on everything from Vietnam to Bill Clinton's scandals.





The Sopranos

Remember when I said that TV's gotten crazy good? This is a large part of why. Not the origin of TV working for a more adult audience, the kind that played with themes and techniques that were more often seen in films, but certainly the one that broke the biggest. Tony Soprano has become one of the greatest characters in American dramatic history, and James Gandolfini's performance is the stuff of legend. It's run was one of the best long-form stories ever told up to that point, and *The Sopranos* was the driver behind so many shows that will end up on this list, including *Mad Men* and *The Wire*.

The 1960 Presidential Debate

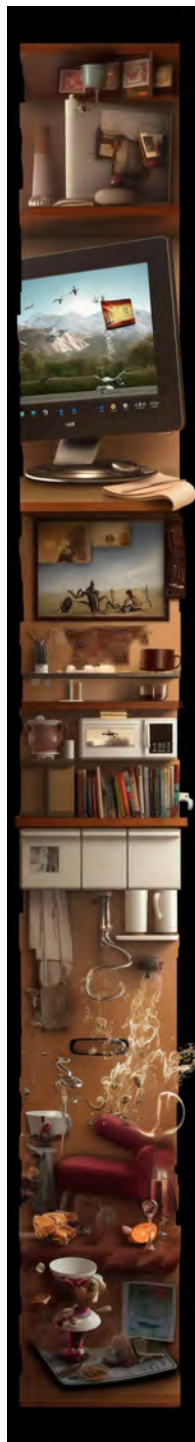
Kennedy. Nixon. This was the debate that determined the role television would play in election cycles. The two of them were so different, and Kennedy was so much better coached, and wearing the darker suit made him pop. When people who know things watched the debate years later, and saw poll numbers, they realized that Nixon won that debate on the policy front, but the confidence projected by Kennedy, and especially that suit, won the country over. Well, and Joe's connections in Texas...

The Wire (Jenna Sue's Light Sumatra roast, May 13, My Bedroom)

Hey, I just mentioned *The Wire* up there! Many consider this to be the finest cop drama ever created, and it's influence can be seen in everything cop show today, up to and including *Brooklyn 99*. The show was brilliantly written, and the way it presented Baltimore was brutal, but honest. Some of the finest acting in the history of television.

Jeopardy

There were earlier game shows, there've been longer-running game shows, but it's incredible exactly how good *Jeopardy* has been, and how its infused the culture. Look at the reaction to long-time host Alex Trabeek's death to see how important it is beyond simply being a very good game show. The show has run for more than 40 years, has inspired board games, video games, and one of the best SNL parody segments ever.







Twitter & TikTok and The Search for Another...

THERE ARE NOW ENDANGERED SOCIAL MEDIAS.

Two of my favorite places on the web are having issues, one internal, the other external. Twitter, which I've been on for more than a decade, was bought by some dude who nearly hit me with his car once and he's not doing much better driving Twitter. TikTok, a company owned by a Chinese concern, is under threat from the Government of being banned. Neither are dead yet, but the fear is there. A lot of folks are talking about where they're gonna go.

Me? I just stake my claims early.

Twitter is the easier for finding a replacement, frankly. A bunch of new Twitter-like sites have popped up, starting ages ago, actually. The first that became known widely was Gab, but then there was Truth. These are geared towards the Right, but really, I wouldn't go there. The recent big one with fandom appears to be Mastodon. It's a part of the Federation or something. I don't know, I haven't been able to get on it because it makes less than zero sense to me. It might be where a strong number of fans end up.

Post.social is news-based, and a lot of journalists have migrated there. It's OK. I'm no journalist, but there are some regular folk. I post there once in a while.

CounterSocial was the first that I tried, was OK, an interesting community, but the lack of viral stuff really hurt it. As much as people complain, I want memes and weird viral stuff.

Spoutible has turned out to be my favorite so far. It's got a good community, there's a news focus, but when I've posted about wrestling it's gotten noticed. It's a nice blend and the community is growing.





BlueSky is out there, apparently from the found of Twitter, but I've not got my invite yet and I'M FREAKING OUT!!!

WT.social is out there, I'm not on it, largely because I feel like that name could be read as 'white social' and I'm not sure I like that connotation. They also put themselves out there based on their no data sales, no ads, and such, none of which matter to me.

Ello.co is a pretty site, but really, it's more Instagram than Twitter.

I tried HIVE, but they ended up having technical issues and it never really started working for me again, which is a shame as I rather liked it.

MeWe? I know folks who have fled there, but I've not found it very good. It's a lot of the things I don't like about Twitter, the people who complain about the app for performance reasons and the like, and a few of the features I like, which are mostly the people.

Other than those, and I know there are many, I'm not interested. If Twitter goes all the way away, I'll almost certainly keep Spoutible going.

TikTok is a lot harder.

I joined TikTok last year, I needed a place to post my short videos, and while it was first portrayed as a place for kids to post dance videos, I found it to be a solid community of folks who had a massive variety of interests. Somehow, I fell in with the Horror community there, and that ended up being one of the best online decisions I've ever made. Kind, funny, thoughtful, and engaging. When we heard that the government was thinking of raising a bill that would give them the right to shut the place down, well we all freaked. Some of the folks I met had TikTok as their primary, and in a couple of cases their only, social media home. We started looking and found...well, stuff.

Clapper was the first I tried, and as far as look, feel, and ease of use, it was all right there. The site doesn't have as many sounds available for videos, which is OK as I use a lot of natural sound for mine, so that's fine. They only allow five hashtags per



video, which is fine with me. Engagement was higher than TikTok for me on most of my videos, which I appreciated, but there was one problem –

-the community.

There's a strong anti-LGBT streak running through it, and a Christian Nationalist set of voices that seem to pop up all over the place. It didn't shock me when I heard that they're strongest in the South. You really have to ride the dislike button and I block a lot. Anyone who says you shouldn't live in a bubble and entertain all points of view on your social media is full of bullshit. I still post to Clapper, but it'll never be my forever home.

Lomotif is a different horse. They allow up to 30 second videos, which is fine for a lot of the stuff I post, though my book/zine/story reviews tend to be longer. This means this is where I post my readings and my silly videos of my kids. Some get a lot of views, more than Clapper at times, but few comments. That's sad, but it happens. Their sound library is great, and I think it's faster than any of the others.

Faster except for YouTube Shorts. YouTube launched Shorts not too long ago, and it's a really smart service. I like the integrated concept, where you can see a users long and short form videos, and that alone makes it a force. The community? I haven't found one yet. The views for some things, like the wrestling shorts I've posted, can be higher than any of the others I've used. The maximum length for a video is one minute, which is a little shorter than I'd prefer. Overall, I will certainly be sticking around, but I doubt it will make a full-timer.

Instagram has Reels, and I use Insta a lot, and I like it quite a bit. Reels are more integrated into the service than I thought they were at first, and there's not as much engagement

for me there, though I can get a lot of views (wrestling content, especially) and it shows in the Instagram timeline, so it will likely be the one that I stick with the longest.

Of them all, I really want TikTok to stick around, because I've got friends there that I love. My favorite person on TikTok, LisaStarchild, is on one other Social Network...Twitter. Sigh.

All in all, I hope things turn around for both. I really can't pay for Twitter, but it seems like that's the way they're looking at going. Throttle me as much as you like, but give me a free version and I'll use the hell out of it! TikTok is all about political will, and it does kinda seem like they're not gonna ban it as of now, but there's always the worry about it. We'll see. Still, I'm having fun trying things out, and having Spoutible and Lomotif and YouTube Shorts isn't a bad add-on.







Flying to Hawaii

I don't like flying.

A lot of people don't, but I love what a long flight allows me – unincumbered media content binging. I always pack a ton of stuff – I download audio books, make sure I have a lot of music on Spotify, a few books, and I spend ages with the in-flight magazine. I do often watch stuff on the In-Flight Entertainment system, but this time, I did not.

This was the first long flight with the wife and the kids since they were 6 months old. They had their iPads, I had my phone, USB cables, and a bag of books. The kids were excellent, they just played their games and listened to us when we reminded them to go to the bathroom. The flight wasn't very full – I had a row all to myself until Bella decided to come over to sit by the window as we got closer to the islands, and we were the first to see us as we passed over land. This meant I could plug into the USB on one seat, and lounge across two seats.

It was the life.

I started by reading Padraig O'Mealoid's brilliant *Poisoned Chalice*. The story of Marvelman, aka MiracleMan, is a great one for showing all the crazy stuff that happened. I am INCREDIBLY

fond of Padraig as a dude, but it's moments like reading this that tell me how incredibly lucky we all are to have his brain.

I read about 30 pages, but I needed to go on to another book, because I needed to move on to an audiobook, which meant that I could read a less rigorous book. I put on *A Killer Collection* by Ellery Adams, a fun cozy-type mystery that I had been ear-reading for a few days. It's a decent mystery set among the world of pottery collections in North Carolina. With that on, I couldn't read something like *Poisoned Chalice*, so I switched to 33 1/3's *Twin Peaks* soundtrack.

33 1/3 is a series of books that each deal with an individual album, from *OK Computer* to *Sex Packets*. It's an incredible series, and it deals with things in a way that no other book series I've ever seen does.

It deals with them like Gen-Xers deal with albums; it deals with them like friends.

That's not to say its all sunshine and lemonade, even for *Lemonade*, but it's really an in-depth look by the people who have the deepest personal connections with the works. I can not say enough good things, and the two hours I lost myself in it, listen-



ing to the end of the mystery, it was wonderful.

We didn't get a meal. Sigh. All they had was Breakfast Sammiches, and they weren't gluten-free.

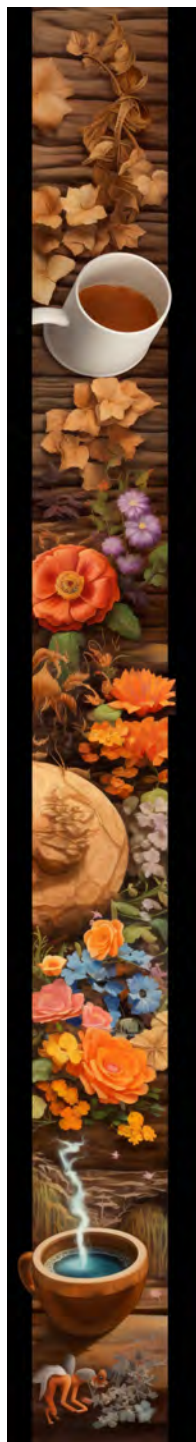
I then transitioned to my required reading for this very issue: *The Agony of Defeat* by Jack Haldeman. More on that later.

I moved on from audiobooks to music, focusing on John aAdams (also in this issue) and a bit on Richard Cheese and a little bit of The Smiths. Good set of stuff to listen to. Mostly, it was there to block out any of the plane noises. I hate plane noises. They scare me. A lot. I almost can not deal with how much they bring me to a place where I realise exactly how many things can go wrong when I'm up there, and exactly how catastrophic each and every one of them is, and how few actually have to happen for the worst case scenario.

The headphones I brought were Bluetooth, so I was wireless! So much so that I got up and went to the bathroom, forgetting that I had them on. Noise-cancelling and over the ear since I don't like things in my ear canals.

While listening to Arcade Fire's *We*, I started reading the zines I brought – *Atomic Elbow*.

I discovered *Atomic Elbow* through Twitter. The editor is on there and has some great wrestling takes. The zine covers wrestling, but





not what you'd expect. There's a long, detailed report on a wrestling show from 1993 and the Smokey Mountain promotion. It was one of those legendary shows that tape traders raved about back in the day. I haven't seen it in a while, but I sure as hell remember the day Dave Lagana brought the tape into the common room and we watched it for the first time. I ordered Chinese. It was awesome.

The two issues I had, 37 and 38, were really good reading, with everything from game content, to a comic, to long video reports, to opinion pieces, to a look at Chinese wrestling! It was all really good, and the editor is also a fan of science fiction and there's a picture of a stack of books, one of which is a K.W. Jeter novel from the Laser Books series. These are my kind of people.

I did use the official Hawaiian Airlines in-flight entertainment, briefly. As the islands were coming into view, I turned on the *Island Cooking* which is a cooking show where an island celebrity (a pro surfer in the first episode, a cast member of the new *Magnum P.I.* series in the second) cooks while the host does an interview and provides a bit of play-by-play. It's a simple format, and the Durham Chili Slaw Dogs looked really good!

It was an easy flight, and now that I type this, drinking Kona coffee after a long sleep following a long day that saw me hot tub, touched

the Pacific, watched the sunset with the wife and kids, enjoyed a Hawaiian meal, and spent the first significant amount of time with me Father-in-Law, I can say for sure I had a damn good flight!





My John Adams

I love Minimalism

It's not that sanctimonious design aesthetic, but the art movement, and especially the music. The music style I knew from the soundtracks to documentaries, but it was the podcast *No Sounds are Forbidden* that gave me the context I needed to really understand what the term meant. I fell hard for Philip Glass, and to a lot of the Richter and Nyman stuff, but it was John Adams, and his unique brand of composition that got me, and it was a tale of two ditties that got me going.

OK, the first ain't exactly a ditty, but a series, an album, if you will. OK, it's a piece made up of pieces. *John's Book of Alleged*



Dances. The idea is simple: it's a series of "dance" pieces to which no steps have been created. Makes sense, huh?

OK, so here's the thing. I'm used to Minimalism, and honestly most contemporary composition, being one of two things – intellectually absurdist or Intellectually dour. Terry Riley's *In C* is a great example of something that is damn intellectual, but really, it's absurdist. I mean the pianist plays C over and over and over and over. Most stuff, including Philip Glass's major works, feels dour, too deep to allow any emotion to escape. Humor, usually, is hard to find. John's *Alleged Book of Dance* is full of light, and laughter, and very smart music. It's got the signs of repetition, and the strange, often contradictory changes, but it's so much lighter than most of John's other works. The dances are clearly demarked – there's a beautiful waltz, a clear tango, and what I believe is a foxtrot. These aren't quite ballets, though they've been adapted into such, but they feel like ballroom dances as interpreted by one of the leaders I art music today.

I listened to it most recently on this flight over to Hawaii (about which, you'll read more elsezine) and I was reminded about exactly how much fun this was. It's never crazy, but it isn't exactly the kind of thing that's got a lot of gravitas. It's light and smart and funny, and yeah. The piece was written for four strings, and prepared piano. I love that, and the sound of the piano

comes across as humourous, maybe, but overall, it's just such a great joyous piece.

Having listened to it, I would love to see something like *Tango Argentina* where a group of Ghod-Level dancers give us ballroom interpretations of the piece. It would be amazing!

The second one is *Century Rolls*.

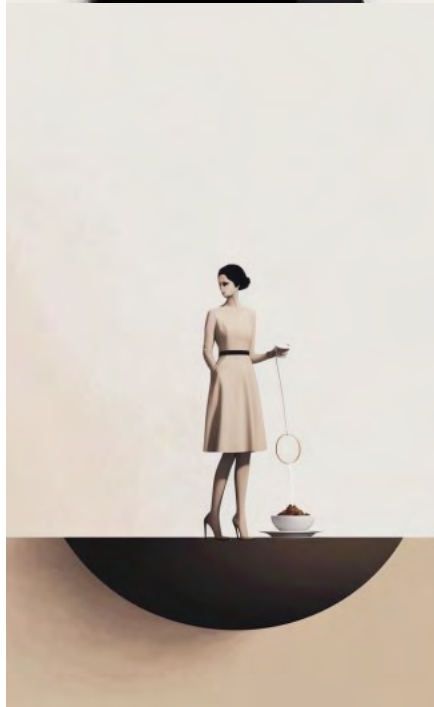
It's a piece in three parts, and Adams had a simple idea' to capture the sound of early 20th century player piano rolls. It's a piece that isn't quite strident, though the piano is a bit hammering, but everything else is a staccato phasing of repetitive strings, horns, and winds. It's something I listen to as a way to come into a sort of distanced focus. It's jazz, and *The Rite of Spring*, and Gershwin and on and on and on. It's amazing, and I love it so much. The Second movement is what I think of when I think of Gershwin if he'd lived into the late 1960s. It's the gentler, the softer, the more meandering.

I love John Adams, but these two pieces are my two pieces.

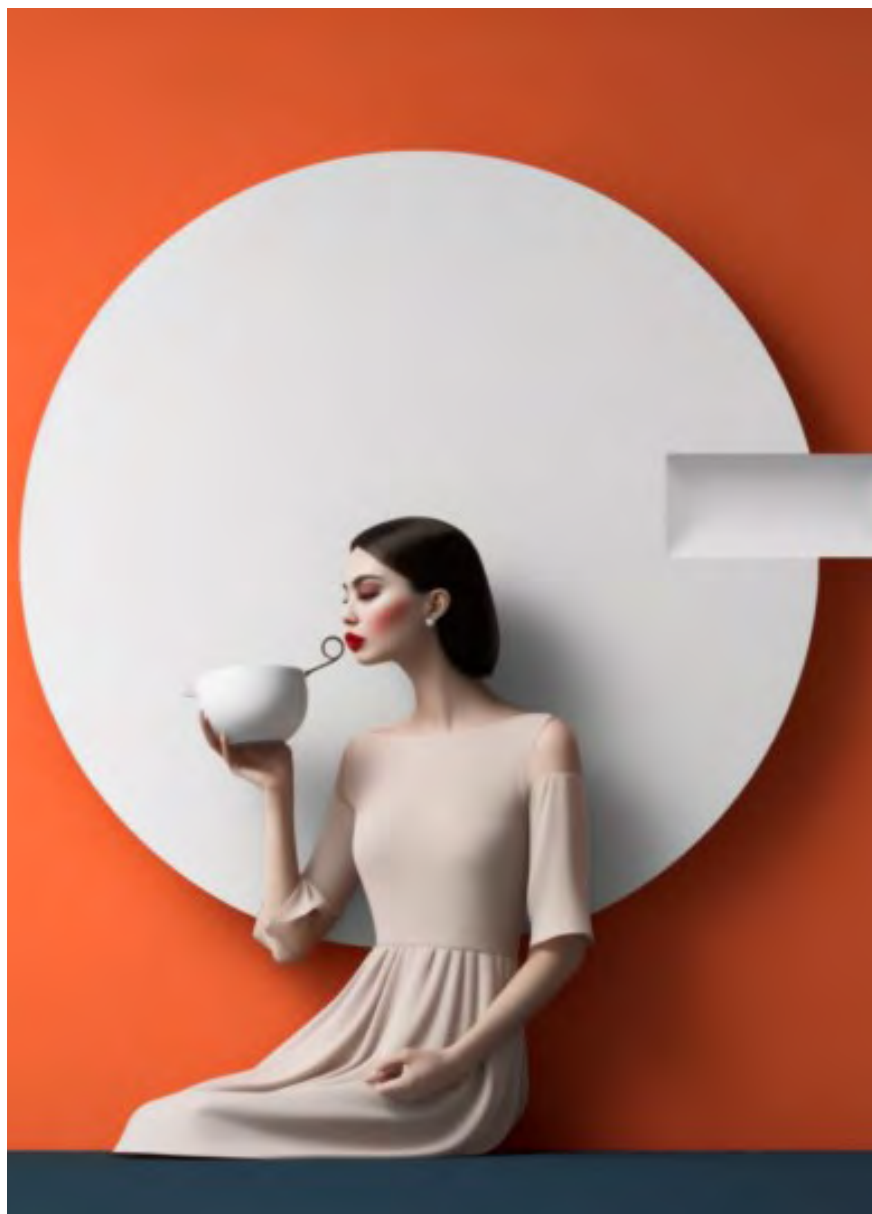




Prompt: Minimalism Coffee









Follow-on to *The Thrill of Victory*, is less a story, more a sketch.

The idea is the same—Football (real football, not what the Europeans falsely call Football) is deemed too violent for actual humans to play, so you've got robots and genetically-modified people/pigs/others who play the game. The two teams this go: the familiar Daytona Beach Armdillos (Go 'dillos!) and the Castroville Arti-chokes (Let's Go 'chokes!)

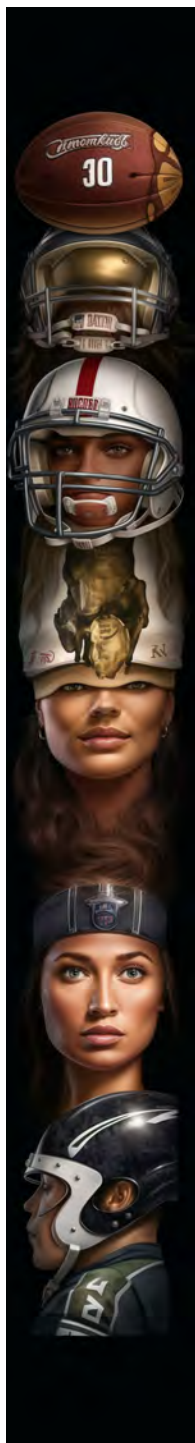
These two towns are hilarious as choices to be important enough in the future that they deserve professional sports teams. First, Daytona Beach ain't huge, it's about 75,000 people, though that's ten-times the size of Castroville, about an hour south of me on California Highway 9, roughly 7,500, and it's not actually an incorporated city! It's claim to fame?

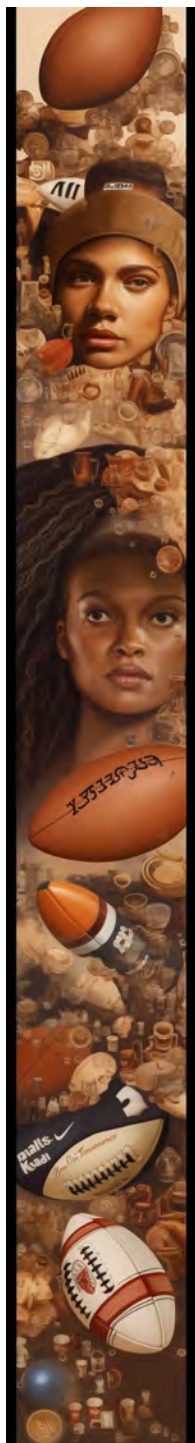
You guessed it: artichokes. It's the world's largest grower of them. It's the city's top crop, and it also features heavily in my book *Food & Crime*, coing from Pen & Sword Books, UK, July 29th, 2023!

Anyhoo, it's easy to see that anyone who knew these cities would have thought them unlikely, but Castroville getting a team would be completely surreal, but we are way in the future, so you never know. The 'Dillos are robots; the Chokes are mutants. It's a match made in Heaven.

The story, whay slim bit there is of it, is that Daytona Beach takes a beating, but comes roaring back to win it all. It's done ina fashion that feels quick as sudden. It's still the classic football, feel good story.

The key to this piece, and why Jay Halde-man is one of my favourite short story writers of all-time, is that there's way more commentary going on here than you'd think. The first is on what football meant as a television product. The two announcers we're introduced to are clearly,





perhaps even OVERTLY based on the *Monday Night Football* duo of Howard Cosell (complete with slightly excessive descriptions of his nose) and Dandy Don Meredith. The Hawk, the character based on Cosell spends much of the game talking about things that aren't football, letting his ego play out across the game. It's a rather brutal indictment of the man, though having watched this era of MNF, it's not too far off. The other announcer calls it straight down the middle like a sporting event. There were serious questions about *Monday Night Football* at first, saying that it was an entertainment show instead of a football show. It worked, though, and while it's swung back towards being treated like a sporting even again, during the 70s and 80s, there were questions.

The second is the players themselves. The game has become only more violent with the removal of human players. The league leaned into that instead of what actually happened, which was the pulling back from the greater violence. Part of that was *MNF*, and the general growth in football viewership. Part of the reason for the impressive growth of college football was the view, particularly in the South (and extra-specially particularly in Texas) that the NFL had gotten too soft and that College Ball was the only true remaining football.

They, of course, had yet to experience the XFL...

This is a great story, and one that really makes me smile. This is one that Haldeman was less pulling out his crystal ball and more making comments on the day in question. He talks, briefly, about the half-time spectacle (a bigger than ever spectacle after last year's bigger than ever spectacle) and it all feels of the moment. *The Thrill of Victory* felt a lot more like a projection, a prediction in the form of a science fiction story, and it worked too. The ability to look ahead is great, but sometimes it means just as much to get folks to take a look at where they are.





JP Loves Steak

I promised I would make him steak in Hawaii.

Mom bought some Denver steaks, about an inch thick. I thought they were a good choice, so I started from good roots.

The condo we got was bare, or so we thought. I looked into the cupboards and there were a bunch of spices and herbs.

Well, there was garlic and onion powder. Montreal Steak Seasoning, and salt and pepper. There was a huge thing of Italian Seasoning. Oregano. A tiny thing of curry powder. Soy sauce and Sriacha and Worcestershire sauce. It was a start.

I poured the remaining Worcestershire Sauce in a ZipLok, then sook in a bunch of pepper, a strong amount of Italian seasoning, garlic powder, garlic pepper, and a hint of lemon pepper.

I tossed the steaks in the bag, shook 'em up and put 'em in the fridge for a couple of hours.

When it was time, we fired up 2 of the 3 burners, and placed a large piece of foil on the portion without the burners. There, they sat for half an hour, absorbing heat, cooking slowly.

After that, we slapped 'em on the hot part of the grill and just a couple of minutes a side. I had boiled some potatoes, mashed 'em up with a ton of butter, a little coconut milk, some Italian seasoning and a large pinch of red pepper flake. Spicy good!

JP loved it! He loves steak, thus proving that he's my kid, and he ate abot 1 1/2 all by himself. Sometimes, the apple falls right at the foot of the tree!



Enough of that!

Hawaii has been good stuff! Only here for a day so far, but we've been visiting with my in-laws. My Father-In-Law, Pat, lived on The Farm, that Tennessee commune where one Mr. Robert Lichtman lived! He knew Bob, and while they weren't close, he was sad when he heard he had passed away.

They live in the middle of a jungle on Maui. They've got chickens and a cow named Peaches. It's gorgeous, but really the fact that there's no running water would be a turn-off from the place!

Vanessa and my anniversary is tomorrow, as I write this. 9 years. The next day, the kids turn 8. Wow.

Next issue will be more from Maui, including a bunch of pics, and a lot more writing!







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It's 4:25am and the Kids have woken me up.

This is not overly rare, but this is vacation, and every laying/sleeping surface in the condo is taken up by a different adult sleeping. So, I'm outside, getting to watch some of the sunset. It's not a bad life at all. I tossed the tablets at the kids, and they're being OK. Getting their meds early will probably help once we enter their feeding time.

This trip is now two full days old and I'm loving it. My in-laws live in a freakin' jungle, with Cacao trees and a cow names Peaches, and there are chickens everywhere and banana and coconut trees and on and on and on.

It's pretty incredible.

The kids are being hard, as is often the case. My mom is being hard, but when is she not? Vanessa is having pain issues, but again, when does she not? My health is much improved, though I'm gaining a touch of weight, though this may have something to do with my blood sugar getting to be a little more normal.



I just got offered an article for a magazine! Always fun!

Sitting on the deck of the Condo, I've got a chicken hanging out around, the coffee is good, and I love life.

May 16, Kihei, Hawaii.

Coffee Drank—LION Gold Roast

Cover—Vanessa Applegate generated with WomboDream

Page 2—Introduction

Photo of Cacao by Chris

Page 3—Table of Contents

Page 5—True Crime News (Lori Vallow)

Page 9—On the Matter of Art

Page 12—A Day or Two in Maui

Art generated by Vanessa using WomboDream
(Hawaii fantastic)

Photos by Chris

Page 23—The Superstar is Dead

Page 25—On Social Media, Porn Stars, and Bovine Hoof
Care

Page 32—Lady Gaga

Other art generated by Chris using MidJourney

Goth Angela White—3, 9, 30

Art Nouveau Coffee—4, 27

Fantastic Octopus Coffee—
5, 24, 35

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32

Superstar Bill Graham—23

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Fantastic Angela White,
Cow, Cooking—29

Lady Gaga coffee—32, 33,
34







She's guilty. Go figure.

Lori Vallow Daybell was found guilty of murdering her two kids—J.J. and Tylee. She also likely killed, or at least participated in the killings, of a few family members.

This story is messed up, and it's worse than it sounds, honestly.

The fact is, these crimes are hyper-focused on, but they're far from the only cases like this. There are more than 9,000 family murders a year. Most, not all, are single murders, and while parents com-

mitt (Fathers more than Mothers, but both happen a lot) most of these, there's no single group that can be singled out. The fact is, poor folks, rich folks, religious folks, atheists, single parents, co-parents, they all commit these crimes.

But Lori Vallow Daybell gets a lot of attention.

There's a whole bunch of reasons why. First, there's the Mormon angle. The fact is, and I hate to admit this, in almost the entire US, there's an anti-Mormon sentiment. They're a weird sect, and they've got the worst parts of Freemasonism, Catholicism, and a whole bunch of Christian Dominionism. Crimes committed by Mormons have always gotten a lot more coverage than others. That's not fair, really; these crimes are committed by people of all stripes, but there's still this stigma.

Lori Vallow Daybell and her most recent husband Chad Daybell ended up radicalizing her, his writings being dark Apocalyptic stuff. It's a crazy thing that radical Mormon sects end up getting so much attention, but here we are. Daybell and then-



Vallow believed that she was a god. That's never a good thing. At that point, she was still married to Charles Vallow, but he filed for Divorce saying that he feared for his family's safety.

For very good reason, it turns out.

Lori's brother murdered Charles, though claimed self-defense. It might actually have been, but it also could easily have been a set-up to make sure it happened.

In September 2019, Tylee disappeared, followed by 7 year old J.J.. Shortly thereafter, Chad's wife died in her sleep. The same month, Alex Cox, Lori's brother, died, though apparently of Natural Causes.

Authorities issued an order to produce the children. Lori and Chad were in Hawaii at that point. They refused and shut the hell up. IN May, 2020, they found the dismembered remains of the kids on Daybell's property. Eventually, Lori was charged with murders, and Daybell would get charged with the murder of the kids and his wife.

If nothing else, this isn't a story of Mormons gone bad; it's a story of radicalization and our collective failure to understand and deal with the entire idea.

-May 17, 2023, Maui Sunset Condos, Kihei, Hawaii

Coffee—LION Gold Roast





On the Matter of Art

Haven't gotten to enjoy much art lately

. The reason, well, timing is a part, but as will be obvious to those who have followed me over the years, zine frequency is inversely proportional to financial health. I did spend some time going over the art of Philip Guston when Bella started drawing and I realized that their stuff reminded me of it. Guston's gotten a lot of heat lately for his works that portray a character in a KKK-style hood, and there's debate over what it means, and even calls for a ban. I get that, though I think it's misguided. Maybe it's just me, but I've always thought that he was comment-

ing on the ubiquity of white supremacy in the art world and was putting it up to the light by presenting it so clearly.

I have always appreciated Guston's work on a couple of levels, more than Lichtenstein, he brought the world of cartooning into the gallery. Somehow, even his Abstract Expressionist works came off as cartoony, and I love that! The Klan images, as they've come to be known, are among Guston's best-known, though I think *The Coat II* at the Anderson Collection, is probably his best work.

When Robert Arneson paid tribute to Guston by casting and painting one of his amazing ceramic pieces, he used an image of the hooded figure, smoking a cigarette. Arneson, himself a somewhat controversial figure for some of his subject matter, did a fine tribute in the style of Guston, but in three dimensions.

Figuring out how to present Guston's work in today's environment is difficult, and it's one of those cases where I really believe that the recent move towards less text on the wall is a really bad idea. We need more explanation, more words, more expectations on the audience, but we'll never really get that until we stop letting educators dictate what curators should be doing with their content. Confrontation is a part of the art world, and always has been, and yes, it can rip open healing wounds, as it were, especially for those in marginalized communities. I say presenting and explaining is the way to go, though being clear it ain't for everyone.

- May 17, 2023 at the Maui Sunset Condos, Kihei

Coffee drank—LION Gold Roast





On the third day, I walked into the Pacific.

The first day was mostly about the flight, about exploring, moving in, connecting with the new environment. The morning of the second day was different, it was the day that felt like there was nothing to do but what we wanted to do. That was what I wanted for my vacation. That is what I needed from this week.

The kids fell asleep about 9 the first night, and at 6am, JP woke up and wandered into our bedroom. He was hungry, and my Mom woke up and made pancakes. We all got up, I made and drank coffee.

Lots of coffee.

Mom had bought a French Roast Kona, which is fine with me, I like a good dark roast. But Vanessa is not a fan, and being with the love of my life meant I was duty-bound to buy some lighter roast coffee. I went to Safeway with my Mom on the way home from my In-Laws.

I should describe that place, called Polo's Farm. It's a semi-hippy commune, which shouldn't be a

shock for a family that lived on The Farm for ages in the 70s and 80s. They grow everything, and have chickens and a cow named Peaches. The kids loved running around, and though not much was ripe, we had some fun cherries and picked some cacao. It was fun, but it was after that we headed to get the coffee.

LION coffee is really good, and the Gold roast is delightful. It's exceptionally flavorful, and while after the French Roast I needed to drink cold water, it's got subtle flavors I'm not nearly sophisticated enough to understand. I just know that I like it.

OK, so after we took a look around at in-laws' place, we headed to the Garden of Eden. It's a piece



of property where they shot a good chunk of the exteriors for *Jurassic Park*, and you can see where the helicopter flew up in the opening shots. It's truly beautiful, and the hike, somewhere about one mile, was just tough enough for me, my Father-in-Law with lung issues related to long COVID, and my kid with cerebral palsy. It was a motley crew, but we did it, and Pat showed us all the plants around. It's good to have a local.

JP, Mom and I headed back to the condo (where I wrote a lot of the last issue of *Claims Department*) and JP grabbed his iPad. This was perfect, exactly what I needed—rest. Vanessa, Bella, Uncle Karl, and her Dad headed to see sea turtles, hike to a waterfall, and enjoy the views.

But only after we stopped at a food truck—Island Taco.

Semi-permanent food trucks are a big deal in Hawaii, and in Haiku, there were a few. The Greek one was closed, but a Hawaiian Mexican stand was open, so we went there. The kids had tacos in corn tortillas. Me? I had the shrimp plate.

The Shrimp was very well cooked, though there were only four of them. There was cabbage and black beans, which I don't normally like, but it was really nice. The highlight of the meal, though, was the turmeric rice. I'd never had it, and it wasn't turmeric to the face, but it was sly and delicious and soft without the mush I sometimes get from Food Truck rice.

Back at the condo, we settled in and





then made the steaks (which I wrote about last issue) and then Vanessa came home and we ate as a family. The sad fact is we don't get to eat together often. We usually have to have two or three different meals between us. Bella will sometimes only eat Quesadillas; JP won't eat cheese. I have to have lean meats, and mushrooms, Vanessa won't be home until just before the kids go to bed, or will have eaten a late lunch. This night, we ate together, some of us standing, but at least three of us at the table at a time, which is as good as we get!

After that, I wrote, Vanessa generated some art (one of which I used for the cover) and I thought about a few things. We've got an important *Journey Planet* coming up and I'm thinking about how I'm gonna get it done in a three or four day turn-around. Sometimes we bite off a lot more than we can chew, and an automatic grinder is basically what I become!



We got to bed a little early, and I finished the last issue, laid in the cover for this one, and then went to sleep.

And that's when a 7 year old wandered in at 425 in the morning, saying they couldn't sleep anymore.

I know I'm supposed to get up, make them a breakfast, engage with them, or have them lay down, rub their back or something to encourage them to go back



to sleep, but instead, I threw their iPads at them and said that they could play *Goat Simulator* until folks were awake.

They were quiet for about an hour. I heated up the coffee. It was gonna be a long day.

It was gonna be a long Anniversary Day.

That's right, on May 17th, 2014, Vanessa and I headed off to the MoMA Sculpture Garden and got married. It was magical, and this trip was part of celebrating it, along with the kids' birthday.

I went out and sat on the patio. It was early, so there were chickens roaming around in the courtyard while I drank my coffee and wrote the first pieces for this issue. I started listening to my podcasts, and I realized that this was the life I would love to live, and I'm 50 in a little over a year, and while there's no way in Hell I'll ever be able to retire, this would be what I'd want—typing on a patio table, chickens running around, coffee coursing through my veins.

I am a lucky guy.

After we all started to get up, Vanessa decided it would be a good time for a morning swim, JP and Bella wanted to keep playing and started eating breakfast, Eggy in a Basket for Bella, a pancake and some POG (Pineapple Orange Guava). They ate pretty good, which is a lot more than they usually do. I made my meat mixture, ground turkey with shiitake mushrooms and carrot and cabbage shreds with a ton of seasonings. It was tasty, if a bit one-note. We ate and I wrote and I applied for a job in Palm Springs and then went for a walk with Bella to the beach. It

was lovely getting to walk together, and since their meds had kicked in, they were pretty calm and mostly listened when I gave instructions, which can be rare. I have a hard time with Bella often, but this was nice.

After we got back, Mom and I headed to Long's, where I got my prescription which was good as I ran out of one of them that morning and only had one of my Lipitor left, and then headed back home, where the kids were doing their travel study works. It was a quiet day, so Vaenssa and I headed to a few Thrift shops, and then to lunch at a place called

Fork and Salad.

Vanessa had a Thai Salad, but me, I had the Lamb Chili.

Now, I've made Lamb Chili, usually mixing it was bison or beef, but I've never gotten this much flavor out of the meat, and the entire production was spicy and lovely. It was so good, that after Vanessa had a bite, after having completely devoured her salad, she ordered her own bowl. It was amazing.



We headed back, the kids were playing, JP with Karl throwing a Frisbee. With his CP, it's hard for him to do any sports, but he always gets out there and tries, and I love him for it.

Then, I headed to the water.

Those that know me well will be full aware of my anxiety. I know there are thirteen variety of harks that can attack in less than two feet of water, six live in Hawaiian waters, two, the Tiger Shark and the Bull Shark, are responsible for a majority of shark attacks world-wide. These are the two I'm scared of, especially in murky waters.

And the water was murky.

Now, it's not as bad as it seems. I know this, and I let my kids go out with their Mom and Uncle into the waters. Where we are isn't great for sharks. Off of Kihei, there have been two attacks over the last year, one fatal, though both in deeper waters further off the beaches. There's not a lot of food in the area where we are, so there's not a lot of reasons for sharks to travel these waters. The two shark attacks here were Tiger Sharks, most likely, and they're the ones that scare me. So, I stayed close to the shore, and eventually just started beachcombing on the very edge of the surf.

So much coral.

Bella loves the coral, and will pick up any piece that's not bleached by the sun already. Some of that washes up, but not a lot. Mostly, they're just skeleton rocks of various sizes.

My favorite thing is coconuts.

Three of them washed up on the beach, and I collected them and examined. One was mostly complete, the other two had been cracked, and it looked like one might have been opened by a turtle, because the interior had obviously been chewed by something about 8 inches in. I love that!

We got back inside, washed up and rested, and then got ready for our anniversary dinner. We got dressed up fancy; or at least Vanessa got dressed up fancy and I threw a sweater vest on over my shirt. I looked respectable. We went to Wailea and first stopped at a Chocolatier, where we had to pre-dinner truffles. We headed next door for Greek food at Pita Paradise, which had amazing kebabs and hummus to die for. I loved every bite.

Back home, we got in just as the kids were going to bed. A great day, and tomorrow was their birthday!

But
more on that
next time.

-May 18th,
Maui Sunset
condos, Kihei,
Hawaii

-Coffee
Drank—Kona
French Roast







The Superstar is dead.

Superstar Billy Graham's real name was Eldridge Wayne Coleman. I'd have changed it too. He was a bodybuilder, a training partner of Arnold Schwarzenegger, and a shot putter in high school. He was a three-time world champion in wrestling, and one of the most influential wrestlers ever.

He basically ushered in the 1980s WWF.

While his heyday was in the 1980s, though he had a couple of decent runs in the 80s, it was his look that influenced wrestlers ranging from Hulk Hogan and the Road Warriors to Triple H and John Cena. He wasn't the first to use steroids, but he was the first to make it a part of his entire presentation.

- Written May 18th, Maui Sunset Kihei

-Coffee drank— LION Gold Roast/Kona French Roast mix





Angela White is a porn star.

There's nothing wrong with that, but she's also a lot of fun. I started following her on TikTok and she was incredibly funny. Yes, she's amazingly easy on the eyes, and yes, she's got that kind of body I find most appealing. That's not the point here. Australian, she's very much the opposite of the other major porn star I interact with on Social Media, Arabelle Raphael, who really wants to post mostly non-porn stuff but knows that her audience wants more of the sexy stuff.



Still, they're both a lot of fun to follow on social media, and while they both embrace their sexuality, it's fascinating to see the ways that they give glimpses into their lives.

Now, people will often weaponize likes on Twitter and other social media. D-Von Dudley, a wrestler and kinda a jerk according to folks I know, likes porn, and gives likes on Twitter. Since he's a big deal in some circles, folks started capping those and posting that he was morally corrupt.

Ummmm... he's a wrestler. He lies for a living.



I like a lot of porn videos that pop up from my friends on Twitter. I'm friends with a bunch of porn stars on Instagram and TikTok. And while yes, while I do like porn as much as the next guy, I really follow them for the same reasons I follow anyone—because they're interest folks who can provide fun content and discussion. That's a big part of my Social Media, and someone's job usually doesn't effect my following them too much.

Unless their job is hoof-maintenance.

I don't know how it happened, but one day I was scrolling through TikTok and a video popped up. It was a guy with a knife who was trimming away



cow hoof horn to uncover a cavity beneath. It was incredible! I watched it and then followed, and watched an hour of those videos. JP and Bella will watch with me most mornings, and they love them!

And yes, they do watch the TikToks from Angela White and Arabelle and Larkin Love and any of the other porn stars I follow. TikTok has rules against nudity and they typically don't go overt, and since I watch with them, any time it gets a little blue, I swipe to the next. I'm pretty sure that's what us parents should be doing.

JP loves the steak videos, I follow a couple of



butchers and get fed the Steak Channel and other meat-related videos. Bella likes the ASMR and Dance videos, which I also love. I'm mostly into the Horror Community, paranormal, and True Crime stuff.

I think that we'll see more and more mainstreaming of porn stars, though some platforms are blocking the heavier sex-based content. It happens, but the key is they're on there to both promote their jobs and their lives, to interact both professionally and personally, and that's something we should consider before trying to ban them.

-May 18, Maui Sunset, Kihei, Hawaii

Coffee drank—LION Gold Roast







There is a Madonna every ten years.

In the 1980s, our Madonna was Madonna. In the 1990s, it was Kylie Minogue. In the early 2000s, it was Britney or Christina depending on who you talked to.

In the 2010s, it was Lady Gaga.

I fell hook, line, and sinker for her work. It's easy to see why; she hits all my buttons. She can sing, she's got an artsy sensibility, she loves Jeff Koons, and she's smart. Super smart.

Her music is slightly more artistic than Cook-iecutter Pop, but she's accessible to a mass audience. Gaga took her name from the work of Queen known as *Radio Gaga*.

Her first full album, *The Fame*, introduced her to the world with the best run of 4 opening songs on a first album.

Just Dance hit all the notes that you need to make an impact with defining a sound. It's electronica in the dance mode, but it actually focuses on her voice. This hits a rare note that shows there's far more beneath the surface, but also doesn't feel like it's dumbed down. It's a good intro.

And *Love Game* is an even better slide in. The opening line to the song “Let’s have some fun, this beat is sick, I want to take a ride on your disco stick” hits the exact right note. In a way, she’s Cole Porter, but the sexiness is far more overt. This one’s a different tempo, and one that really puts out for solo dancers in the club.

Then we come to the major, the biggest and more important of the songs on the album—*Paparazzi*. The history of pop music has few songs that say as much about being a pop star than Gaga does here, and when she hits like this, there are literally none better. This explores not only what kind of monster Fame can be, but why we still need fame where we can get it.

The final of the first four is *Poker Face*. Read one way, it’s a story that talks about how relationships are gambles, but moreso, how a gambler’s reaction to love is different. Read another, its about how toxic love can be between thrill seekers. It’s layered, and I love this song so much.

Lady Gaga is also a fully weaponized video machine

While *Poker Face* and *Paparazzi* are both great



videos, it's the video for *Alejandro* that really hits every possible note. There's the visual design, layered theory of Catholicism, BDSM, queer culture, and militarism. It's basically *Like a Prayer*, but given over to a harsher time, and more decadent time. The fashion here, Alexander McQueen, Armani, Atsuko Kudo, Calvin Klein and more. It's a visual feast, and when it gets to be just Gaga dancing and singing in the best Liza way possible,

Her video for *Telephone* with Beyonce is not as visually stunning, but it does show that she understands storytelling. I believe that it was the *LA Times* that said that it was Gaga that knew the symbiotic relationship between image and pop music better than any of her generation, and it showed when she went and became friends and collaborators with Tony Bennet. Never let it be said that she doesn't have chops, and she held her own musically with him. Her handling of duets is really smart, her performance of standards leaves little to be desired.

My favorite performance of hers, though it little seen. Gaga played a vox and piano version of *Speechless* at the VEVO launch party. If you ever want to understand her deep groking of music, this is the video that shows it best.

And she toasts Jimmy Iovine in the middle, and nothing is better than that.



That's the Fourth Coffee issue!

Hawaii, as you can probably tell, is great! A wonderful break, and a generally good time. The next issue won't be as quick as the last couple have been, but it won't be too much longer. I got that issue of *Journey Planet* to work on!

I had the best BBQ Pork Belly, and even better was when I diced a few pieces of it up, sauted some Shiitakes, and then tossed them together. It was amazing!

If you want to tell me something—
johnnyeponymous@gmail.com







Claims Department

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Shuffleboarding—Page 5

Art Prompt: Coffee Shuffleboard

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Art Prompt: Kenneth Anger Film Still, coffee

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Art prompt: massive abstract expressionist, woman

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Your Base Are Belong to US

Mumford & Sons— Page 26

Art Prompt: Little Lion Man, Folks, The Cave

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Welcome!

I'm back from Maui. It was delightful. Even after Bella got sick, a fever of 103 for 3 full days, it was still far better to be sick in Maui than well at home!

I actually started working on this issue on the Lanai of our condo in the Maui Sunset complex. I started after I finished the layout of the *Journey Planet* dedicated to Vincent Docherty. It's a good 'un, part-tribute, part-conrunner primer, part memoir, all action! Give it a read!

I've been working on getting a new set of webhosts for *Journey Planet* and *The Drink Tank*. Sadly, I haven't found anything that's easy enough for me to use.





There are some games where my rules are better.

Shuffleboard is one of them. I 'learned' to play on a court I found at my Gramma's old folks home. The problem was, though they had the sticks and the biscuits, no one knew how to play. No one seemed to play, so one day the family, visiting for Easter I think, decided to take out the stuff and give it a go. We sorta made up the rules on the spot, and they made sense to us then.

First, the actual rules

2 players or teams alternate tossing their pucks down the court to try and land them in the marked portions of a triangle. If they get their pucks (called biscuits) into the spaces without touching the lines, they get that many points. If they go beyond

the triangle, or they go out of the court, they lose ten points. You play to 75, usually.

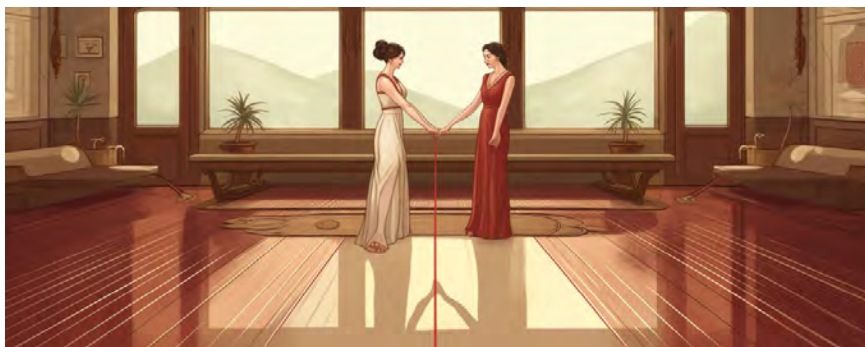
We came up with a version I now call '10-point plus'

In 10-point plus, you still push the biscuit towards the triangle with the scoring areas. If you land it completely within the scoring portion, If you land your puck completely within the scoring area, not touching any of the white line, you get that many points, no matter how many of you are in that section. If no one is in all the way, but someone is touching the scoring portion and the white line, they get that score, unless someone else is touching the same scoring portion, then whoever's biscuit is more within the scoring area gets those points. Since the biscuit is wider than the white lines between the scoring sections, you can score in more than one area, so the best possible score would be 30 with a single biscuit.

Now the complicated part.

Every round where at least one biscuit is in the playing field (between the two lines that are in front of and behind the scoring triangle) then however is closest to the '10' portion of that scoring triangle gets ten points UNLESS someone is in or touching the 10-point section, then only they can claim those ten points.

I like this version because you never lose points, like in the regular game when you go behind the scoring triangle, and so instead of playing 'first to...' style, we usually play three rounds, back and forth







Top 5 Meals in Maui

I've had good food on this vacation.

The one thing I wanted on this trip was a plate lunch . The last meal I had in Maui was a plate lunch. The only plate lunch I had on the trip. The best five meals I had were all great, and I really didn't have a bad meal here. Including the ones I cooked!

Yak & Yeti—Appetizer Platter

The Appetizer Platter at Yak & Yeti was mostly pakora, though they also included a samosa and some onion bhaji. The Shrimp Pakora and Chicken Pakora were both excellent! The rest was good.

Vanessa had the Lamb Seekh Kebab, and it was spicy and lovely! The Tamarin sauce that came with it worked very well to take the fire!

We also got banana pakora, which I'd never had but were slightly chewy and delightful!

The Restaurant at Maui Ocean Center



I ordered the Hummus.

Joke was on me, the hummus was made from Breakfruit, Ulu. I would not have known if I hadn't read the menu.

The garlic and the flavor of the Ulu just made it taste exactly like hummus, and the taro and sweet potato chips worked on every level. It could not have been a more perfect appetizer. I only had a basket of

fries with it, and they were only OK. The Fish 'n Chips JP ordered were the thickly-breaded kinda, and were good. Vanessa had a venison burger, which was both tasty, and lean, without the normal gamey tang.

The Fork and Salad

I wrote about the lamb chili last time, but this time I'm writing about the butternut squash soup AND the lamb chili.

Like, together.

The Chili has a pointed spiciness that I really enjoy, and the Butternut soup is clean, with a hint of ginger, and coconut milk as the base. Adding a few spoonfuls of the Butternut Squash soup into the chili enhanced the flavor, added depth, made the



chili stretch a little further, and best of all, made the chili a touch less spicy. A HUGE win!

Maui Ocean Center—Feeding the Hanu

This is the cheat, but I need to say it—there was no highlight of the trip lighter and higher than getting to feed the Green Sea Turtles at Maui Ocean Center.

It's a part of the behind-the-scenes tour, and they have four hanu—they don't have names, but I named the one you see in the photograph below Pointy.

It's a perfectly cromulent name!

The Green Sea Turtle gets its color from the algae it eats,



which means that the hanu is the Flamingo of the sea!

At the Maui Ocean Center, they feed them green bell pepper, kale, spinach, lettuce, and I believe banana leaf. They seemed to love it, and Pointy eat about half of the bell pepper we all threw in!

Da Kitchen.

My last Hawaiian meal (I do not count the hot dog I grabbed in the airport!)

I got the Kalua Pork plate lunch. JP, upon hearing I was getting plate lunch, declared that he wanted a Teriyaki Beef plate lunch, but my Mom got him a Teriyaki chicken plate lunch, which he would not eat.

I gave him a bite of my Kalua Pork.

“Pops, this is the food of the gods.”

I tend to agree.

I had been eating off-and-on all day, so I only had a few bites of the pork, and one of the pieces of his chicken. The next morning, I had a couple of bites of the pork and the rest of his chicken, and he finished my pork.

And let me tell you, they were both awesome!

I get plate lunch here every now and then, and they're good, but the pork was exceptionally, slightly less fatty than here, and the chicken was great. They cooked it skin-on, which is exactly the way it should be made!







Kenneth Anger

Kenneth Anger died May 11th. He'd been missing for years.

OK, that's overly dramatic, but there's truth to it. In his final couple of years, he had fallen sway to someone who controlled his last days. There's a lot of questions as to the why of things, but it probably boils down to money.

Kenneth Anger is an incredibly important figure in the history of cinema, and even more so to the legend and myth of Hollywood. His films were avant garde, expressions of myth, Thelema, and queerness in modern America. It's weird to think of where cinema would be without him and his influence. He didn't invent queer cinema, but he certainly helped perfect the im-

age that it projected in its early days on the main stage of festival culture. His masterpiece, *Fireworks*, was the kind of film that told the spirit of the times, of homophobia and homoeroticism and how the two played together in the 1950s. It was a film of daring visuals that are incredibly layered with art and cinema history. The opening shot, a sailor in dress whites, carrying Anger in a pose straight out of La Pieta, is as iconic as they come. The way that Anger plays with his themes, sometimes hinting at things with a mere half-second camerashot (like those of a set of urinals) and establishing ideas that would permeate early queer cinema, like the use of milk.

The films *Scorpio Rising* and *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* look into his occult philosophies, and they are just as layered. There's always been a thick layer of Thelema in Hollywood, and art in general, and Anger established a visual language for the late 20th century form.

Of course, as I've written about often, there's *Hollywood Babylon*. Yes, it's not a history text. Like his films, it's a series of impressions, full of rumors, creations, myths. He wasn't writing the history of Hollywood; he was telling the myths of Hollywood in the same way he was telling the myths of Thelema. He invented some, though there's little from either *Hollywood Babylon I* or *II* that hadn't been whispered before, but what he was doing was setting a secret history, a new history. It's a remarkable piece of work, but it's very clear he never intended it to be taken as gospel, but more as gossip.

If there's one thing Kenneth Anger was, it was a gossip.

I met him, kinda, through Forry. I remember seeing the two of them at the House of Pies on Vermont. I've been led to believe they had a falling out. This happened a lot with Anger.

Supposedly he shot a long piece on the old Ackermansion. I really wanna see it.

His passing was non unexpected, but still sad. He made his last significant work between 2008 and 2010. *Ich Will!* Is the only piece from that era that will likely be remembered with any fondness.

You could go on about Kenneth Anger for ages, and I probably will at some point. I devoured *Hollywood Babylon*, and found the second book to be one of the most impressive of all the books telling teh darker side of Hollywood. I know it's fashionable to be accurate, but would have done, he printed the legend.







I haven't been painting.

Now, I know I've been in Hawaii, but as I mentioned a few issues back, I haven't been painting for a while. I ran out of paint, and it's not a priority to re-stock. Vanessa's been doing her art and going to fairs and such, she even did OK vending at Illusive Comics & Games during Free Comic Book Day, but I don't sell so I don't NEED paint, but I miss it.

Why do I paint?

Well, I've always wanted to. I love art, and during 2020 and 2021, I found that painting was just plain fun. I used to be able to sign-in at work, do an hour or two, then take 30 minutes or so to make a few paintings. Or I'd do it after the kids went to sleep. Or whenever I found a moment. It was a lot of fun.

So, now I got a bunch of high-quality paper.

A batch of it was dumped on me and now, well, I'm not sure what to do with it all. It's about 50 pieces, large (16 x 25) and heavy stock. I'll probably end up holding it for a while, but really, it calls out for some colour.

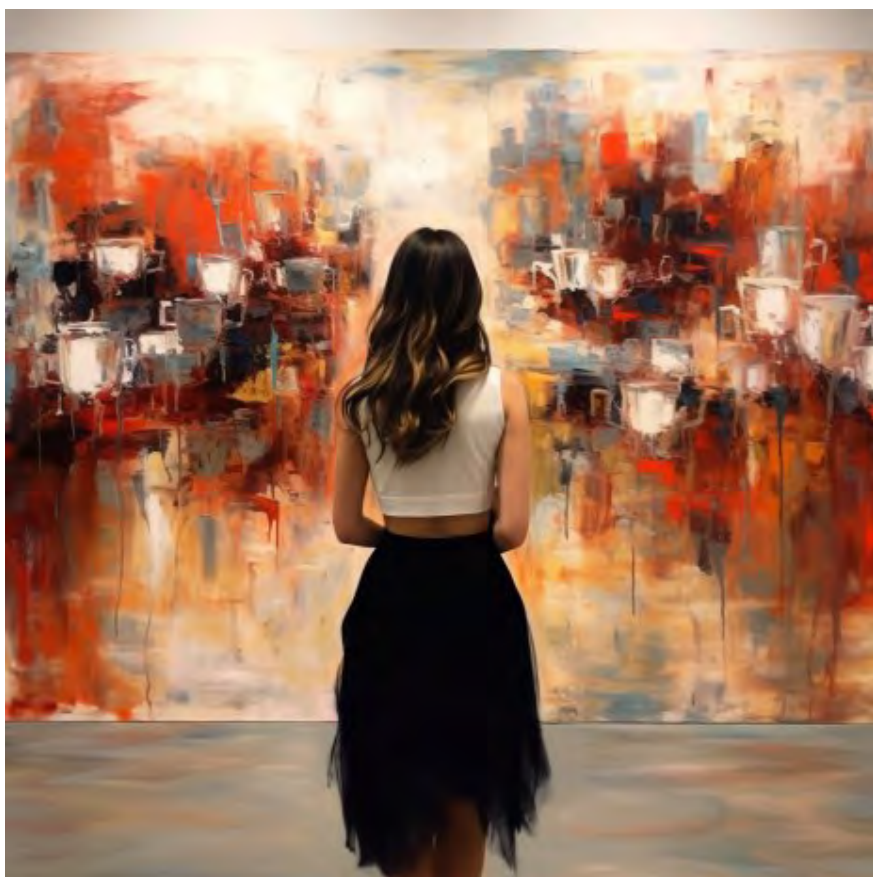
My thoughts on painting aren't exactly simple.

The first thing is the process has to be at least one of three things—therapeutic, necessary, or fun. Ideally, it's all three.

You see, not all painting must be to express your inner-most tortured feelings to get them out so you can see them. It's a totally valid reason to paint, or do anything I recon.

Necessary is a lot broader. It can be necessary because you've got an image in your head and need to get it out. It could be financially necessary. It could be important to do because you promised it to someone. There's a lot of reasons why painting might be necessary, and it's one reason a lot of people do paintings, especially professionally.

For fun, though, is the largest segment, because it includes everyone from those three year olds fingerpainting to the groups at old folks' homes haven't painting time. This is where most of my painting ends up. I'll add that it's also where a lot of my writing comes from. It's where I live with just about most things in my non-essential life. I just find it fun and wanna do it.



Now, there are complaints about all three of those.

The first is often called self-indulgent, self-focused, or worst of all, over-sharing. Whoop-de-doo!

The second can be called mercenary, or commercially-motivated.

The third? Frivolous. There is, apparently, no perfect reason for making art, and perhaps no even good reason.

I like painting, and since I have no way of knowing what my paintings are going to look like, I don't have the ability to see what I'm painting since I can't visualize, I am always shocked and often pleasantly surprised over what I hath wrought. Clearly a part of why it's so fun for me.

Now, part of why I'm so big into the AI art stuff, besides the fact that it can bring the stuff out of my head so much better than my hands can, is because it's basically free. I've spent decades study the intersections of art and commerce and computers and on and on, and basically I've come to the same conclusion I did years ago with Media-property fan art—*Do What You Will, Just Don't Sell It*.

And, for a lot of people, that's the problem with my painting. If I'm just doing it for fun, why share it? I got the same question about my zines in years gone by, back when people seemed to care. The answer is because that's fun too!

Maybe someday I'll have my art in a museum, though probably not. Maybe someday one of my pieces will sell for cash-money. Doubt it. Maybe, just maybe, I'll be buried with hundreds of them cluttering up my coffin.

Actually, I kinda hope that last one happens.







2020 National Video Registry Part 3

Hallmark Hall of Fame

One of the longest running shows in American television history, and one that's still pretty much going, and changing names and networks more than a few times. The real reason it's on here, other than incredible longevity, is that it presented some amazing stuff early on, and then later an entire cable station, The Hallmark Channel, popped up from the ground it tilled! The best episode ever is a raging debate, but I'll take *Sarah Plain & Tall* with Glenn Close and Christopher Walken.

General Hospital

The soaps have always been an important part of the television landscape, and there's never been a bigger moment in the general culture than when Luke & Laura happened in the early 1980s. It's weird that such a beloved couple could arise from a rape storyline, but here we are.

The famed wedding episode was watched by 30 million people, and propelled the series as the 1980s most important

soap, even when shows on CBS and NBC over-took it in ratings, and *One Life to Live* in storytelling and character development, it still remained a force. Today, it's ABC's only remaining soap, and it's still got it all.



The Simpsons

The Simpsons has run more seasons than any other animated show. There's a good reason why—it's funny.

Yes, earlier seasons were the best, and certainly the most iconic, but it's still really funny, usually topical, and mostly good viewing for smart people. Three generations of Americans have been influenced by the creation, and I think it's going to be on until the voice of one of the five main family members dies. Others have said that we're only getting a couple of more seasons, but that's been said before.

If you look at the checkboxes that determine if something should be on the Registry, it hits all of them really, really, really hard.

M*A*S*H*

I don't know why *M*A*S*H** the movie isn't a bigger part of American culture, but the television show certainly was. The acting was superior to just about everything else on TV, the writing was smart, even when it got Alda-level 7 preachy, and the characters were golden. This was a series that took the format and run into the corners. It was a comedy that was dramatic, and set the tonal floor for series like *Moonlighting* and pretty much every modern dramedy.

All Your Base Are Belong to Us

OK, this one is so important for understanding not only the rise of early meme culture, but on the importance of Japanese pop culture, and specifically gaming, on the generations born in the late 1980s and 90s. The poor translation of *Zero Wing* led to an explosion of tie in bits that people did all over the place, and some of them were actually funny! It's an important artifact of an important time when internet culture was being defined.







The first song my kids ever heard was *Little Lion Man*.

I wasn't a huge Mumford & Sons fan, but I Had downloaded the song and played it for the kids. They didn't seem to notice: they were in their incubators doing their damndest to stay alive.

Go figure.

That song, more than any other, has things that speak to me on a deep and important level. It's a song that features the line "I really fucked it up this time, didn't I my dear?" and there may be no single line in an y song that is more appropriate to my

life than that.

The group formed in the mid-2000s, and they hit it big pretty fast. Their first album had Little Lion Man on it and that was their signature hit until we got their second album. The Mumfords dwelled in the world of American Old-Time music, but it's also a kind of old-time that never really existed. It's far from the kind of thing you'd hear on a front porch, and far more the kind of thing you'd hear from a heavily-produced bunch of folk singers.

That is not a bad thing.

There's a lot of melding going on here, with songs like The Cave feeling far more Alt Country than I would have expected. Winter Winds feels sea-shantyish, and Roll Away Your Stone is what comes closest to something you'd hear coming from a bluegrass band of the 1990s.

But it's Little Lion Man that really hits on every level. It's got bluegrass bones, but it's structured like a 1970s rock song. It's powerful, and smart, and everything hits like you'd expect. While I can never be objective about it, it was what I played for my kids while they were hanging by a well-tended thread in Neo-Natal Care, it is a powerful song. Best evidence: I had it on my phone so I could play it for them.

It also means that the first song I ever played my children not only contained the word 'fuck' several times, but one about failure and bad behavior, and darkness.

Good start for those kids, no?

The second album Babel wasn't as ground-breaking, but it was beautifully made, and the songs went into a more 1970s straight-ahead rock feel. It was a folk-tinged version of Fleet-

wood Mac, I think.

I Will Wait is the one song on the album that comes close to Little Lion Man. It's got soul, is more optimistic, and just feels like their peak. I remember when it came out feeling like they had felt out the corners of their sound at that moment.

I was right.

The third album, Wilder Mind, was your basic indie rock album. A good one, but still pretty basic. Here the feeling is that they weren't experimenting anymore; they found what they wanted and were gonna grab it the way they wanted it. It's right up there with Arcade Fire at their most pop-friendly.

The only song I legitimately love on the third album is The Wolf, which is somewhere along the Biffy Clyro spectrum. It's so good and danceable!

The Mumfords ended up losing one member because of Twitter dumbness, but really, they're not the band they were at the beginning, which we can't really expect most of the time. I re-visit those first two albums all the time, and if there's a band that isn't going to put the lightning back in a bottle, I think it's Mumford & Sons, not because they couldn't if they tried, but because they don't wanna try. I don't blame them, because they're making it work!







True Crime News

The fantastic podcast *Some Place Under Neith* returned for the third season. It's a great show that focuses on the stories of missing and exploited and murdered women. They've covered some dark material, and while they do get bogged down in some stories, they are an incredibly well-done podcast covering True Crime topics. They returned with a story about a ballerina named Dusty Buttons (her actual, real name!) and it's a doozy.

First off, I should say I love ballet. My love of classical music led me to enjoying the world of dance. If you've seen my TikTok likes, you'll see about half of them go to dance videos. Ballet is pro wrestling without the violence, and it's beautiful. It is as close as I've discovered to physical embodiment of music. It's not

there in modern dance, sadly, but it's there in ballet.

Now, Dusty Button was one of those superstars from the get go. She had exactly the look and technique that makes superstars even though she started not in ballet, but in jazz-tap, a dark world in and of itself. She has an edgier look than most big company ballerinas, though that's a bit like saying the wildest stamp collector at the World Congress of Stamp Collectors.

Then again, I do know a few wild stamp collectors.

Anyhoo, she rose through the big schools and joined the Royal Ballet School in London, but became a Principal Dancer for Boston Ballet in 2012.



That's HUGE!

Being a Principal is a big deal, but Boston Ballet is one of the Big Three Ballet companies in the US (along with American Ballet Theatre and San Francisco Ballet) and if you make it there you'll make it anywhere.

I stayed in the Emerson dorms one summer, which we shared with Boston Ballet's summer program, and I can tell you those muscular thin kids sure can smoke the hell out of a pack of cloves.

She was also a teacher doing intensives at conventions and private lessons, typically with young women.



Which makes the True Crime part of this story so damn ugly.

Dusty is married to a fellow dancer named Mitchell Taylor Button. He spent years as an instructor, and while Dusty had built her name being a big company Principal and becoming one of the biggest names on Dance Instagram, Taylor was in the corps, but ended up better known as a teacher. He would use that position to groom girls who were his students.

There are several dancers who have come forth, four covered in a *Cosmo* article from last April. The four they mentioned are all important, but there are two that are among the best-known dancers in the US.



Sage Humphries is one of those dancers who has gone on to incredible success not only through Boston Ballet, but on Instagram. She's also a model, and has been the most outspoken. She was groomed by Taylor, and eventually this evolved into a relationship where the Buttons and Sage were a threesome.

There's a lot to unpack there, but the basic gist is this was made out to be a consensual relationship by the Buttons, but quickly turned much darker, including a rape that took place in the gun room of the Button home that seemed to have started out as some sort of scene that quickly went places that Sage did not want and she screamed through a spandex covering when they sexually assaulted her.

Though Taylor was the instigator, most likely, Dusty watched and at times, participated.

The Buttons point to relationship-y texts between Sage and Taylor as evidence that it was a relationship, and they flat deny that the assaults happened. The big problem is the power dynamic makes informed consent next-to-impossible, especially if promises of advancing her career were made. She was 19, but



was away from home for the first time and isolated. Even if what the Buttons claim about it being consensual, this was certainly an abusive relationship. It's pretty clear, though, that Taylor was abusing his power and that pretty much voids all thought of it being a regular relationship.

Danielle Gutierrez is one of the most beautiful dancers I've ever seen. I first discovered her on Instagram, and she's amazing. Her claims include physical abuse and that Taylor raped her when she was 17.

The one that's gotten the most attention after Sage's, though, is Gina Menichino. She's a super-star these days, both as a dancer and a choreographer. One of the most athletic dancers I've ever seen, but not at the cost of expression. Taylor sexually assaulted her when she was 13. This is a clear pattern, and Menichino says that Dusty knew, and to a degree, participated in continuing assault and abuse.

Now, there's another problem, and it is something that's difficult to stop— The Buttons are running an online harassment scheme.



They're fighting back. They've filed defamation suits, claiming that these women are seeking fame and making it all up, costing them endorsements and employment. They've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to legally deflect these accusations, and now they're broke, so they are taking the fight to the internet.

Basically, they've started a website that seeks to turn the tide against those they abused and assaulted by posting rebuttal videos and content. It's a tactic that can horribly backfire, but it can also play well in the court of public opinion. One of those suing the Buttons has pulled out because of harassment.

In my eyes, it's a good thing they've lost any access to young women. Boston Ballet fired Dusty, and Taylor isn't getting any more students. If there's any good that comes out of this, it's at least that.

The film *Black Swan* took a hard look at what it means to be in Ballet, while some of these same ideas are present in one of my fave films, *Centre Stage*. It's a rough world, Ballet.







The (Other) Haldeman Story

Thirty Love

As always, Jay was working with the moment.

Tennis in the 1970s was going through a major moment. Stars had emerged that eclipsed just about every other player up until that point as far as penetration into the zeitgeist. The names McEnroe, Navratilova, Connors, Evret, Borg, King, Ashe, all of them pure legends, all of them known well-beyond the borders of the courts.

Thirty Love tackles three ideas—the idea of sports celebrity, the idea of the body and the mind being driven apart, and the idea of stepping aside.

The story looks at tennis and posits a 60 year old player named Charlie Duncan who lives a brief period into the future. He can see a little more than a second into the future most of the time, but at times he's able to see further.

In what he says is going to be his final tournament, a winner-takes-all tourney, he faces a younger player and sees that his winning will wreck him and he has to make a choice, which he does and we're given info that this turns out to be a happy ending.

OK, that's the easy stuff.





Charlie is easy going, a throw-back to the early days. That's a nice thought, that the nice guys can finish first. He's able to because of the foresight that the living in the future thing gives him, and that's enough to keep him in the game into his 60s.

That's ancient for a professional athlete.

The fame Battle of the Sexes from 1973 featured Billy Jean King beating Bobby Riggs, though he was 55 at the time. The story there, and it was a rumor from the day it happened, was that Riggs threw the match because he could make incredible money betting against himself in the UK through Ladbroke's. Nice theory, might be true, he was a gambler and a hustler, but who knows?

Charlie sees the future and decides to do what's best for his opponent. This is called 'doing business' in the world of wrestling. He gives the new kid the win, solidifies his career, gives him his moment. It's a nice thing, and there's a detail that Haldeman gives us that really speaks of his desire to make the ice-floeing of Charlie seem like a good idea—

- even if he wanted to, even with the knowledge of where that ball was going to go, he couldn't have returned it, it was just too fast for him.

That little tidbit shows that he understood his character needed to not only be making a choice where he was giving the kid the win, but one where he was right in giving the kid the win.

Because he should have been out to pasture long ago.

And thus, steroids.

Now, there have been PEDs and even 'roids in sports dating back to the 1920s. Yes, Babe Ruth took a form of PED, though he claimed only once. Mays, Mantel, Gibson, Killebrew, and on and on all took various substances to keep their careers going. Years after the story was written, we saw two careers lengthened by steroids that changed everything—Bonds and Clemens. They never made the choice to walk away, but instead leaned in to their crutch and stuck with it. Bonds, in particular, had a good reason; the Giants were always in the hunt for the World Series and he never won one. It wouldn't be until three years after Bonds retired, stepped away when he probably had another good year or four in him, that they won one.

This is a story as old as time, and not just in sports. The young being held back by the old-timers who refuse to let their crutches go. *Thirty Love* exposes that beautifully, and in a way that just feels exactly right. Of course, I'm getting to the age where I should be thinking like Charlie, but I ain't there yet.







And here we are, another issue doned.

I'm really enjoying doing these, particularly as I'm really getting more and more into coffee. The LION Coffee gold roast I drank writing each and every one of these pieces is great, is running low, and keeps me going, even on teh days after the nights when I'm awakened at 4am by a pesky child.

I did all the art with MidJourney this time, save for the couple of photos. Somehow, I've misplaced the drive with the fan art on it. It'll make a comeback, I'm sure.

I've got very little on my calendar for the next few months, though I'll be taping an interview about the history of video games for the Roku channel. Where is it taping? The Computer History Museum! It's with my old friend Steve 'Slug' Russell, the inventor of SpaceWar! And one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet! Back into the documentary interview game, that's me! Sadly, the Zodiac Killer project that contacted me appears to have stalled. Sigh.

Next issue, next week, probably Friday, but really, who knows these days?

Again, check out the latest *Journey Planet* and then maybe enjoy some *Drink Tank*, though the *What We Do in the Shadows* issue is a couple of few weeks away!

Bon Swah!





Page 2—This one

Art Prompt—Coffee, Reading, Octopus

Page 3—Art Prompt—Coffee stained women

Page 4—True Crime News

Art Prompt—Coffee, doppelganger, Coffee witch craft

Page 9—The (Other) Haldeman Story—Shortcount in Chicago

Art Prompt—JFK Wrestling

Page 11—Art Prompt—Coffee drinking Patrick Nagel





Page 12—I Played SpaceWar with the Inventor

Art Prompt—Coffee, SpaceWar; Spacewar, women

Page 15—Stacked coffee, dessert

Page 16—The National Video Registry 2020—Final

Art Prompt—coffee, television, vintage

Page 19—Art Prompt—Coffee, White Magic

Page 20—Frank Black

Art Prompt—Frank Black, Coffee

Page 23—Art Prompt—Coffee, Art Deco, Brunette

Page 24—I Ran Into a guy at the grocery store

Art Prompt—Coffee, Famous Monsters of Filmland

Page 26—Art Prompt—Coffee, running, towers, earthquake

Page 27—OK, enough fun and Games

Art Prompt—Coffee, octopus

Page 28—Art Prompt—opulent, coffee, brunette.



True Crime News

This week, I look at a Food Crime.

Which reminds me that my book *Food and Crime* now has a US release date—October 7th, 2023!!!

This week, a woman got a 21 year prison sentence for attempting to murder a friend with poisoned cheesecake so she could steal her identity.

While attempted murder by cheesecake is salacious enough, there's a lot more here. Enough to make it into my next book!

So , let us start with the main character: Viktoria Nasyrova. In Russia, in 2014, she killed someone. She fled Russia to the US and has been here ever

since, laying low.

Well, laying as low as operating as a Dominatrix who robs Johns can.

She'd been working as an escort and Dom, but she was aware that a Red Notice had been issued by Interpol, meaning if law enforcement caught wind of her, they were supposed to arrest her.

She had murdered Alla Aleksenko, poisoned her in fact, and then took her life savings. This is likely what allowed her to get to the US.

Apparently, she fell into the fames Eastern Bloc East Side. There's a New York thing, where all sorts of folks from former parts of the Soviet Union and Bloc countries are drawn together, no matter what divisions might be there in the old countries. It's not at all rare for roaming globs of Russians and Bulgarians and Ukrainians and Armenians and Latvians and Serbians and on and on and on. I had a couple of great nights hanging out among them once with my friend Natasha and a great of models that she was friends with. Another, a group that started out with three of us, grew to seven, we shed four of them and gained six more, including Regina Spektor!, and then we lost and gained folks until we ended the night, me the only of the original three walking out of the breakfast spot nearly 16 hours before we set forth from the apartment I was staying at. These groups tend to not only socialize, but to support one another. It's not unusual for someone to open up their home for extended, and often open-ended stays. I remember my friend Nic saying that it wouldn't be a problem for me to get a place to stay for a week when I visited, just send Dmitry a Facebook message and he'll set me up with a

spot in one of the apartments he manages.

It's a tight and giving community.

So, she became friend with Olga Tvsyk, a Ukrainian living in New York. They were roughly the same height, had the same hair color, complexion, and basically while you might not mistake one for the other on examination, you might walk passed one and think it was the other.

The idea was Viktoria wanted to steal Tvsyk's identity and use it herself, so she brought over three pieces of cheesecake over. Viktoria ate the first two, thus proving they were all fine, like Connie eating one



of Don Altabello's cannoli in *Godfather 3*. Tvsyk ate her's, and he lost consciousness, fell over, vomited, and basically was not in a good way.

The last thing she remembered was Viktoria walking around the room.

Eventually, Viktoria walked off with Tvsyk's passport, work authorization card, and some valuables.

So, the thing about communities like the Eastern Bloc East Side is that they often check on each other, and Tvsyk had a friend come by. Viktoria had staged the scene, scattering pills around her body on



the bed as if she were endgame Marilyn Monroe. Her friend called the medics, and she ended up surviving.

Viktoria had used a drug that you could get in Russia, but not in the US, and if she had not left the cheesecake container at the scene, and if Tsvyk had actually died, she might have gotten away with it. Luckily, criminals are dumb and usually lazy.

Viktoria didn't get away this time. She was arrested, and though her lawyer is appealing based on inappropriately harsh sentencing, it's not likely to help much, as she'll almost certainly be deported back to Russia either way.





The (Other) Haldeman Stories

Short Count in Chicago

I Bought most of the Resnick *Alternate* anthologies.

Most of them are light fun. A couple have some really good stories, but for the most part, they're just nive little explorations into alternate history.

Short Count in Chicago is a fun story, and there's not much more to it than a series of references to world leaders as if they were wrestlers. This includes Krushchev, Papa Doc Duvalle, of course Eisenhower, and probably a couple of more. It's a simple bit of political fan service, I think, and while I've got my issues with such, it's fun stuff. And short, like 4 pages.

The thing is, it shows no understanding of how wrestling storytelling is different from all others. You have a story to tell, and you have to make the crowd understand that the momentary IS the overall result until the very last moment. That is to say that when the good guy is on offense, it should be

clear that he's going to win because he's the clear moral choice and no other outcome is possible. If the Bad Guy is on offense, it should feel like it's going to end up being the cheat, the fix, the insurmountable odds of the unscrupulous brawler that just couldn't be beat.

Now, this isn't to say that Jay didn't get that, it is doesn't present it. It does bring up a question that he only kinda addresses: who is the face and who is the heel?

Now, the way it's presented is that Nixon (the Trickster!) is the heel, which makes sense, though The General (Eisenhower) is clearly a beloved face and is giving him his full backing. The Hyanis Kid, Kennedy of course, and his brothers are, maybe, the hells, or perhaps something that was just coming around when Haldeman would have written it: the cool heel. They were the bad guys that people loved, think Stone Cold Steve Austin. He clearly gets the win, by cheating after a fashion, but he's also still beloved. It's weird.

This is probably my least favorite of Haldeman's sports stories, but it's not without it's chams. It might just be that I know too much about wrestling.







I played SpaceWar! with The Inventor!!!

Now, this was far from the first time, we'd played a couple of times a year at the Museum, usually for a film crew, but this was the first time since I Was laid off in 2019, and the first since the pandemic. Also the first time since he had three strokes, though he got incredibly lucky and had no long-term effects from any of them! Steve Russell, more than anyone else, is responsible for giving games to computers in the 1960s, and not just because of SpaceWar!

Well, because of the attention that SpaceWar!

Got.

You see, *Rolling Stone*, back when it was still super-relevant, did an entire GIANT article about SPaceWar, I believe written by Stewart Brand, he of the *Whole Earth Catalog*. While other games had gotten some press, notably NIMROD from the Festival of Britain. No other early computer game, and frankly, other than UNIVAC, no other computer anything, had gotten that sort of attention from a crowd who would have been appreciative.

You see, SpaceWar was distributed largely by the DECUS, the User Society for Digital Equipment Corporation. If you bought one of their minicomput-



ers, you got a papertape with SpaceWar on it. This got it out to pretty much every university that had a computer center. That meant a lot of younger players, right? And *Rolling Stone* was pretty much read by younger folks, and Ben Fong-Torres usually made sure they were the target of everything.

I'm lucky enough to have known Steve since 1999, and he even showed up at my wedding. He's coming up on 90 in not too long, and he's slowed a bit after his strokes over the last few years, but he's still got it! This time, I managed more than a couple of wins playing against him, which has never happened before! He's still got a great technique, he was the winner of the mini-Tournement we held with me, Nolan Bushnell of Atari, Al Alcorn, designer of PONG, Bill Pitts, designer of The Galaxy Game, Jordan Mechner (I think), Vint Cerf, and Jerry Pournelle. It came down to me and Steve, and I got destroyed.

I'm just glad I got a chance to play with him again!. It's a ROKU Channel doc that should be out later this year.







Murphy Brown

Few shows have become a major part of a Presidential campaign, but *Murphy Brown* was, but more importantly, it was one of the defining shows of the 1990s. Candice Bergin was a big star who had kinda fallen out of the public eye. The show had an exceptional ensemble cast, and the writing was very smart. Dan Quayle making the point that Murphy becoming a single mom was a bad thing is still one of the weirdest talking points in the history of American politics.

Seinfeld

No, it wasn't a show about nothing. It was a classic apartment building comedy, not unlike *The Honeymooners* or *I Love Lucy*. The show is simplistic when considered as a set of stories being told, but complex when it comes to the construction of the individual episodes. Some very smart writing, and the final episode was one of the last major episodic television events.

The Puppy Episode - Ellen

Ellen Degeneres wasn't out. It's weird, because I remember knowing, but I guess it was merely an 'well,

she's obviously a lesbian' thing as opposed to a being actually out thing. This two-parter basically outed her character and her to the public. It was a huge deal, and some point to it as a reason for the increase of LGBT-plus programming in the years immediately after. It's also a very strong two-parter!

The Oprah Winfrey Show

Hey, Oprah was in The Puppy Episode!

This was the show that made Oprah Winfrey into one of the richest women in America. Starting in Chicago, by the 1990s, it was literally everywhere, launching careers, stirring up controversy, and somehow unleashing Doctor Phil and Suze Orman on the world. It remains the highest-rated daytime talk show of all-time.

Homegrown Video #1

OK, if you're doing a list of significant video material, some of it is gonna have to be porn. It's just too big a deal. Homegrown Video was the innovator in amateur pornography starting in the early 1980s. This transition from professional to amateur porn was a significant part of the story of *Boogie Nights* and really an important aspect of the explosion of porn in the days before the internet, and even setting the table for the world of porn we know today. Number 1, or something like 800, was the introduction to the genre for many, and made the company insane amounts of money.

Dire Straights' Money for Nothin'

Let me say that my years as a computer historian dedicated to computer graphics, music, and art made me exactly the right person to take a look at this one. This was the first exposure for a generation to computer animation, and it's one of the most beloved music videos of the 1980s. It's impressive that they managed to get so many different kinds of animation in this one,

including the integration of live action and computer animation. It's one of the videos that best defines what MTV was in the middle 1980s.

Sabado Gigante

Two generations of Hispanic kids grew up with Saturday night Sabado Gigante. It was everything you could possibly want: part game show, part talent show, part general weirdness. I loved watching it, and it was a cultural touchstone for us half-breeds who sometimes felt distanced from the furthest branches of our family trees.







Frank Black

Frank Black is a stage name.

He's gone by Black Francis, back when he was with The Pixies, but it's as Frank Black that I think he's had the most impact on me personally, and on music in general.

I first came across Frank Black through a music video—*Headache*.

The video was a regular on *120 Minutes*, as I've written of frequently, but more importantly, it was super-cool! The song itself is one of those songs that when I hear it, it instantly makes me think of the

1990s. You can almost see the tendrils of influence flying off of it, into performers like Beck. His wild performances and fairly mundanely esoteric lyrics were just about the craziest you'll ever hear from a mainstream musician.

You must remember this was the 1990s; the alternative was the mainstream.

Frank Black's album *Teenager of the Year* was a major hit, and though I believe that *Headache* was the only single to chart (and it didn't chart too high, Number 10 on the Modern Rock charts) though it wasn't as wildly received as you'd think hearing folks talk about it now.

We weren't ready. Well, I was ready. I don't know about everyone else.

The songs were an infectious combination of punk and hard rock and folk and indy. It was the best kind of music, and I couldn't think of anyone else that had done stuff like this.

Except Bob Mould and maybe Mike Watts, but more about them much much later.

The opening song alone makes it all worth while. After a fuzzed-out intro, we get a trainwreck of cacophony that somehow feels like a choo-choo, and then we hear Frank's voice—

While everyone's virtually singing a popular song, I still believe in the excellent joy of the Pong."

If there is a lyric more suited to my interests, I am unaware of what it could be?

That song, *Whatever Happened to Pong?* is probably the best punk song on the album. It's fast, it's

fairly simple, it's simply wild! It was listening to it way back in 1994 that I got my first documentary music video idea: turn the less than 2 minutes of *Whatever Happened to Pong?* Into a documentary telling the story of Pong. I pitched it a couple of times at the museum, and it never went anywhere, but it would be a great idea!

The album that really hit me though was *Oddballs*. Now, here's the thing; it's an album of rarities and the like. The titles track is, without question, y favorite Frank Black song. He says it's him trying to be The Rolling Stones, and I can hear that, but there's more to it. It's got a punk sensibility that the Stones never really mined. It's a smoother song than almost anything on *Teenager of the Year*, but at the same time, it's got the same sort of lyrical brutality going on that makes the exterior feel functional to the existence of the interior. The message is contained in the wrapper, as it were.

He's going by Black Francis again, but to me, he's always gonna be Frank Black. It might be because I find him to be a significant part of the 1990s Modern Rock scene and that's what he went by in those days. I've tried his recent stuff, and it's good, some very good, but ultimately, it's not *Oddballs*.







I ran into a guy at the grocery store.

OK, not literally, I should mention, but stick with me. He was in the check-out line in front of me, buying what appeared to be a Memorial Day BBQ's worth of food stuffs.

It was Memorial Day, after all.

Anyhoo, I notice his shirt—*Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

Well now, that wasn't exactly common 'round these parts.

“Like the shirt,” I said, “Forry was a friend.”

“Oh, thanks,” he said, looking down at the first issue cover printed on the black t-shirt, “did you say Forry was a friend?”

And from there, we chatted. He had picked up an issue of *Famous Monsters* when he was 7, and it changed his life. From that moment on, he wanted to make monsters.

“There was a photo of Gill-man in an issue, and I studied it so long I finally figured out how to make my own.”

I’ve read *Famous Monsters*, sure. It was around the house once in a while, and I can remember Forry talking about it a lot back in the day. I don’t remember much about it, other than the Dr. Acula stuff, honestly, because that’s what I wanted to read.

This fellow in the Safeway check-out line, though, wanted to make monsters because of Forry, and he actually went out and did it.

“I’d make things for haunted houses, small time filmmakers, parties. I worked on a movie called *The Milpitas Monster*.”

I giggled.

“I’ve seen it,” I said.

“I’m sorry,” he responded.

We chatted for a bit while the clerk did a price check, then he left and I left. I know a lot more about Forry these days, much of it more disturbing than I’d like, but also I don’t disbelieve any of it. He did inspired people, myself included, and that has a value, too. Like I always say, legacies are complicated.



OK< enough fun and Games!

I'll be working on another issue for next week, likely only one (I've somehow acquired pink eye, so I'm treating that and trying not to touch my eyes and that's harder than it sounds and WAH!)

I'm gonna be looking for a lot more material for upcoming issues. I'm still trying to catalog the stuff Henry Welch gave me, and there's a lot of it! I'm looking through *The Whole Fanzine Catalog* at the moment and am amazed at the incredible stuff that was out there in the 1990s. *Astromancer Quarterly* was another title I've absolutely been absorbed into. It might be the most beautiful zine run I've got in my collection.



